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HISTORY

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

UNDER THE CONSTITUTION.

BY

JAMES SCHOULER.

VOL. IV.

1831–1847.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:
WILLIAM H. MORRISON.
1889.

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AUTHOR'S NOTICE.

In preparing this fourth volume I have availed myself, as before, of all library facilities and all historical collections to be found in Boston and Washington. Among the many works which are cited in these pages, I desire to make especial mention of Hubert H. Bancroft's History of the Pacific States, which throws much light upon our Mexican relations and the conquest of Texas and California; also of the Lives of the Tylers, by John Tyler's sons.* I have, besides, gained valuable information upon important points from Secretary Bayard, of the State Department; from William Allen Butler, the custodian of the Van Buren papers; and from the venerable George Bancroft, the last survivor of Polk's momentous administration.

One more volume, which I hope to prepare as speedily as my other engagements may permit, will bring the narrative to the spring of 1861, and complete this work according to the plan I proposed at the outset. As I enter into the era of the great political struggle in our American Union between freedom and slavery I am impressed the more strongly with the grave responsibility I have undertaken, and my misgivings increase lest many of my readers who have thought well of former volumes cease to confide in my good judgment and discrimination. But I have still endeavored to learn the whole truth as others have not learned it before, and to state my conclusions as

* See, also, the Joel R. Poinsett papers, in Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, October, 1888, as to the "nullification" troubles.

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a historian candidly and upon an ample exposition of the facts. It is not in my nature to be impartial as between right and wrong, honorable and dishonorable public conduct. All men and all political parties, however, I have constantly sought to interpret by the atmosphere of their times.

J. S.

BOSTON, MASS., January 1, 1889.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIRST ADMINISTRATION OF ANDREW JACKSON.

SECTION II.

THE UNITED STATES IN 1831.

	PAGE
Leading American traits and manners to be considered,	1
American and foreign delineators; Trollope, Martineau, etc.,	2
Mixed elements of society; commonplace,	5
Business activity; industrial life; speculations,	6
Seriousness of home life; table manners,	10
Social recreation; business and pleasure,	12
Courtesy to the fair sex; courtship and marriage,	14
Condition of woman at this period,	15
American theatres; operas, amusements, etc.,	16
American art and architecture; science,	19
Dress and language; intelligent conversation,	20
Leading Atlantic cities; New York, Philadelphia, etc.,	22
The great West and Mississippi valley,	26
Paving, heat, lights, etc.,	28
Dominating influences at the North,	29
The South and slavery; Virginia and cotton States,	30
South Carolina and Massachusetts; the Cavalier and Roundhead,	31

SECTION III.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-SECOND CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1831–MARCH 3, 1833.

Recess of Congress; Jackson's rupture with Calhoun,	31
Sudden dissolution of the cabinet; example set by Eaton and Van Buren,	31
Calhoun's friends forced out; new appointments,	33

Digitized by Google

PAGE
Calhoun's turning-point; his national ambition crushed, . . 36
Seminole controversy; the Rhea letter; death of ex-President Monroe, ... 37
Calhoun's new heresies; nullification; political movements in South Carolina, ... 38
Calhoun argues his cause; Jackson and Webster oppose, . . 40
Assembling of the new Congress at Washington; distinguished members, ... 41
Clay in the Senate leads the opposition, ... 43
President's message; United States Bank seeks a recharter, . 44
The fight forced by Clay and the Bank, ... 45
Condition of the Bank; President Biddle, ... 48
Petition for recharter; the Bank's enemies call for an investigation, ... 49
Fight of the Bank for a renewed existence; Biddle in politics, . 52
Clay's resolution for a protective tariff, ... 54
Protection and free trade; condition of American manufactures, ... 55
Tariff situation at this time; legislation of 1828, . . . 58
Discontent of South Carolina; free-trade arguments, . . . 62
Threats of nullifiers; moderate bill of the House; debates, . 65
Public land distribution schemes, ... 66
Bills to recharter the Bank and revise the tariff sent to the President, ... 68
The former bill vetoed, the latter bill approved, ... 69
Bank recharter lost; personalities in the Senate, . . . 70
Congress adjourns; Presidential canvass begun, ... 71
Clay nominated by Republicans; Jackson by his own party, . 72
Van Buren rejected by Senate as minister; Vice-President on Jackson's ticket, ... 73
Issues of Presidential canvass; new political elements, . . 76
Anti-Mason movement; Morgan's disappearance, . . . 77
Anti-Masons in national convention; Wirt for President, . . 81
Campaign results; Jackson re-elected; Van Buren Vice-President, ... 82
State contests; Republican party dissolved; Anti-Masonry declines, ... 84
South Carolina rebellious; new tariff act nullified, . . . 85
Defiance to the Union; nullifying ordinance, ... 88
President Jackson takes a firm stand; his proclamation, . . 89
Meetings to sustain the President; Virginia disposed to mediate, 90
Congress reassembles; President's message; comments, . . 91
Tariff reduction bill in House; the force bill in Senate, . . 94
Calhoun a senator; bravado and delay in South Carolina, . . 96
Calhoun and Webster in debate; the constitution defended, . 98

Digitized by Google

PAGE
Clay's attitude; tariff reduction and force bill; compromise with Calhoun, ... 102
Force bill and Clay's compromise tariff passed, ... 103
South Carolina boastfully submits; hollow truce of Clay and Calhoun, ... 106
Concluding reflections; Calhoun's sectional ambition, . . 109

CHAPTER XIV.

SECOND ADMINISTRATION OF ANDREW JACKSON.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-THIRD CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1833–MARCH 3, 1835.

Jackson at his zenith of popular renown; his second inauguration, ... 112
His personal appearance and manners, ... 113
Life at the White House; department buildings, . . . 116
Cabinet changes; the Washington centennial; Jackson's eastern tour, ... 117
Tours of Clay and Webster; new era of travel, ... 121
Progress of steam locomotion; river steamboats; rivalry of canals and railways, ... 122
River steamboats; Erie canal boat, ... 128
Era of railways; new means of transportation, ... 125
Early locomotives and trains; accidents; State charters, . . 129
Jackson's forward movement upon the United States Bank, . 132
Secret plan of removing the deposits; cabinet opinions; Secretary Duane reluctant, ... 137
Jackson takes the responsibility; paper read to the cabinet, . 140
Duane removed; Taney appointed to the Treasury; order issued, 142
Bank stands firm; Biddle's response; condition of the Bank, . 146
Congress assembles; appearance of the Capitol; members, . 147
Clay leads the assault upon the President; panic session, . . 152
Public lands and land distribution thwarted, ... 152
Western and southern alliance; internal improvements defeated, 156
Senate arraigns the President for removing the deposits, . . 156
Temporary distress in money market; machinery of supplication, 160
President refuses to yield; resolutions in Congress, . . . 161
Amended resolutions of censure; the Houses disagree, . . 164

Digitized by Google

PAGE

Jackson protests against Senate resolution; Taney and other nominees rejected, ... 165
Official changes; illustrious deaths, ... 167
House investigates Bank; committee rebuffed; Senate investigation, ... 168
Rivalry of local banks with Bank of the United States; condition of American currency; hard money, ... 170
From distress to inflation; mania for local bank charters, . . 173
The purse and sword; new public custodians, ... 174
Social lawlessness; civic mobs and riots; Ursuline convent burnt, 176
Attempt on the President's life, ... 179
Congress reassembles; numerous changes; a quiet session, . 180
Jackson's message; the Bank assailed; public debt paid off, . 182
John Quincy Adams in the House; carries French resolutions; his personal example, ... 183

Section II.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-FOURTH CONGRESS.

March 4, 1835–March 3, 1837.

New cabinet changes; Amos Kendall, Postmaster-General, . . 188
New drift of parties; Whig party formed; its elements, . . 192
Jackson Democracy; loco-focos; parties compared, . . . 193
Early Whig gains; State elections; Presidential candidates, . 197
Democratic convention; Van Buren nominated, . . . 199
Mob spirit increasing; new strikes and riots; rich and poor, . 200
Native American and anti-slavery tumults, ... 202
New anti-slavery movement; the situation reviewed, . . 203
Southern sentiment; the northern free negro; ten years of rest, 204
Condition in 1831; slave insurrection in Virginia; new northern agitation to emancipate, ... 209
Garrison and the *Liberator;* other bold agitators, . . . 211
Abolition societies formed; crusade against the South; British emancipation, ... 214
Anti-slavery riots; incendiary speeches and pamphlets; Garrison in Boston, ... 216
North and South inflamed; agitation begun, ... 218
Congress meets; President's message; incendiary matter in the mails, ... 220
Uncertain action taken; Calhoun as an alarmist, ... 220
House petitions and the Pinckney resolutions; "gag-rule" adopted, ... 224
Adams claims the right of petition; attempts to expel him, . 226

Digitized by Google

PAGE
Arkansas and Michigan admitted; local deposits sanctioned, . 229
Distributing the surplus, ... 229
Deaths of Madison and Marshall; Taney Chief-Justice; judicial changes, ... 231
Cherokee nation and Georgia; removal across the Mississippi, . 233
Van Buren chosen President; election returns and methods, . 236
Jackson's personal triumph complete; Senate resolution of censure expunged, ... 237
Foreign affairs; imbroglio with France; spoliations, . . 239
France conforms to the treaty; amicable settlement, . . . 243
Other spoliations adjusted; foreign treaties, ... 244
Spanish-American republics; declining interest, . . . 245
Annexation and manifest destiny; American schemes, . . 246
Texas annexation a southern project; preliminary sketch, . 247
Offers made to Mexico; American settlers; Jackson and Houston, 251
Texan settlers assert independence; Santa Anna defeated at San Jacinto, ... 253
Jackson co-operates; resolutions in Congress, ... 254
Claims against Mexico; Texas recognized; Jackson's policy, . 256
Money crisis approaching; local banks multiplied; craze of speculation, ... 257
Jackson's empirical treatment; the specie circular, . . . 259
Distress of the poor; New York fire; flour riots, . . . 263
Close of Jackson's administration; character and traits, . . 265
Jackson and Jefferson compared; strong personal supremacy, . 272

CHAPTER XV.

ADMINISTRATION OF MARTIN VAN BUREN.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-FIFTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1837–MARCH 3, 1839.

Jackson at his successor's inauguration; leading appointments; the ex-President's farewell, ... 274
Financial crisis and crash; banks suspend; failures, . . 276
Public deposits lost; revenue dwindles; specie circular, . . 279
President's difficulties; extra session of Congress called, . . 281
Independent treasury proposed; Van Buren and Silas Wright, . 283
Bill lost; acts for temporary relief; surplus distribution postponed, ... 285

Digitized by Google

PAGE
New Whig gains; administration unpopular; State elections, . 286
Second or long session; President firm; hard money and independent treasury, ... 289
Bills lost in Congress; rupture of Clay and Calhoun, . . . 290
New York banks lead for resumption; collapse of United States Bank; its Pennsylvania charter, ... 292
State elections; Seward carries New York, ... 294
Democratic defalcations exposed; Van Buren hampered, . . 295
New anti-slavery excitement; attitude of Whigs and Democrats, ... 296
Northern and southern governors in controversy; the Lovejoy tragedy; Faneuil Hall protest, ... 298
Anti-slavery petitions; "gag-rule;" angry scenes in the House, 300
Secession of southern members; conciliating resolutions, . . 302
Texas annexation; northern alarm; uncertain boundaries; spoliation convention with Mexico, ... 302
Final session; "gag-rule;" duel of Graves and Cilley, . . 308
House personalities; final adjournment, ... 310
New moral reforms agitated; religious and social movements; Emerson and the transcendentalists, ... 313

Section II.

Period of Twenty-sixth Congress.

March 4, 1839–March 3, 1841.

Troubles on the north-east boundary; Maine; Canada; British policy, ... 316
War with Florida Indians; Osceola and the Seminoles, . . 319
Congress assembles; New Jersey certificates in dispute; House organized with difficulty, ... 320
President's message; sub-treasury bill passed, ... 324
Financial embarrasements; suspended banks; distress, . . 324
The administration arraigned; embezzlements and extravagance, 327
Whig candidates and convention; Harrison and Tyler nominated, 328
Clay's disappointment; Seward, Weed, and Greeley, . . 331
Democratic defections; party convention; Van Buren and Johnson, ... 334
The Tippecanoe campaign; log cabins and hard cider, . . 335
Van Buren's party overwhelmed; Harrison and the Whigs triumphant; electoral results, ... 340
Liberty party; anti-slavery sentiment spreading; negro fugitives, ... 341

Digitized by Google

PAGE
Correspondence of northern and southern governors; slave-trade; "Amistad" case, ... 343
Changes in the Supreme Court; new cabinet appointments, . 344
Van Buren's last annual message; State debts; final ruin of United States Bank, ... 345
Congress inattentive; arrival of Harrison; Van Buren's last days, ... 348
Van Buren's administration reviewed; personal character, . 349
Advance of science and literature; Antarctic expedition; Smithson's bequest; telegraph, etc., ... 353
Distinguished names in literature; the cheap press, ... 354

CHAPTER XVI.

ADMINISTRATION OF WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1841–APRIL 4, 1841.

Harrison's inauguration; cabinet appointments, ... 359
Distribution of the patronage; Clay and Webster factions, . 362
Administration policy fixed upon; Congress convened in extra session, ... 368
Harrison's sudden death; national bereavement; funeral of a President, ... 364

CHAPTER XVII.

ADMINISTRATION OF JOHN TYLER.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS.

APRIL 4, 1841–MARCH 3, 1843.

Vice-President Tyler summoned to the Capitol; oath and address as President, ... 367
Tyler's past record; first official intentions, ... 368
Speedy rivalry between Tyler and Clay; aspirations for next President, ... 372

Digitized by Google

PAGE
The Virginia clique; Tyler's constitutional scruples, . . . 373
Whig policy of a new National Bank; Clay and Tyler quarrel, 375
Extra session of Congress; President's message; Clay's programme in the Senate, ... 377
Sub-Treasury repealed; President signs the bill, ... 379
First Bank bill; Clay and Secretary Ewing; bill passes Congress, 380
Vetoed by the President; secret flatterers; first Bank bill lost, . 382
Whig efforts to conciliate; second Bank bill agreed upon and reported, ... 385
Tyler's new doubts and officious advisers; second Bank bill vetoed, 387
Whig policy gravelled; Tyler's motives considered, ... 389
The Botts letter; Tyler's breach with Whig party complete, . 392
Resignation of cabinet except Webster; new cabinet formed, . 393
Address of Whig members of Congress; adverse State elections, 394
Webster's efforts to sustain the President; Clay leads out his party, ... 395
North-eastern boundary troubles; McLeod's capture; the "Creole" and its cargo of slaves, ... 396
British right of search for slaves; proposal to compromise north-east boundary, ... 399
Arrival of Lord Ashburton; Webster's negotiations; treaty arranged, ... 400
Second and third sessions of Congress; wrangles with President; President's exchequer bill defeated, ... 404
Tyler's breach with his party widens; the axe of patronage, . 405
Whig revision of the tariff; President's veto compels loss of land distribution, ... 406
New tariff act as passed; compromise of 1833 abandoned, . 408
Tyler censured by the House; more Presidential vetoes, . . 410
American industries North and South; cotton products; northern commerce, ... 411
Northern manufacturers; New England mills; Lowell factory girls, ... 414
Fruits of Whig victory lost; Clay's farewell to the Senate; other resignations, ... 417
State debts and repudiation; Pennsylvania avoids dishonor, . 418
Dickens in America; efforts for international copyright, . . 421
Border ruffianism; anti-slavery agitation growing; sentiment of conservatives, ... 422
"Gag-rule" in Congress; Adams and the Haverhill petition; vain attempt to censure, ... 424
Unseemly exhibitions in the House; expulsion and return of Giddings, ... 426
Collision of freedom and slavery; fugitive slaves; Supreme Court decision, ... 427

Digitized by Google

SECTION II.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-EIGHTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 11, 1843–MARCH 3, 1845.

PAGE

Single-term theory of Whig origin; its worth; Tyler's application, ... 430
A President without a party; Whigs proclaim Clay for their candidate, ... 431
Tyler's new appointments; provision for friends, ... 432
Clay's canvass; State politics; Webster's wounded pride, . . 433
Executive expedients; Webster leaves the cabinet; celebration at Bunker Hill, ... 436
Death of Legaré; new cabinet changes; Tyler proclaimed for the succession, ... 438
The Texas intrigue; southern attempts to arouse sentiment a failure, ... 441
Mexican spoliation claims; aggression upon Mexico; Jones at Monterey, ... 443
Secret overtures from Texas; British influence; truce between Texas and Mexico, ... 448
Tyler's secret proposals; Houston and his patron; duplicity towards Mexico, ... 449
Congress assembles; organization; new members, ... 451
House elections by general ticket; President's caveat and State opposition, ... 453
Cabinet appointments rejected; the "Princeton" disaster; Upshur and Gilmer killed, ... 454
New cabinet appointments; Calhoun Secretary of State, . . 455
Tyler's trump card; secret annexation treaty; clandestine arrangements exposed, ... 457
Treaty submitted; discomfiture of Clay and Van Buren; Presidential candidates and conventions, ... 460
Dorr rebellion in Rhode Island; patroon war and anti-rent troubles in New York; State disturbances, ... 462
Anti-Texas letters of Clay and Van Buren; Whig convention; Clay for President, ... 465
Democratic convention; Van Buren set aside; nomination of Polk, ... 466
Office-holders' convention; Tyler and Texas, ... 468
Magnetic telegraph; messages between Baltimore and Washington, ... 469
Tyler's treaty rejected; unprofitable session of Congress, . . 470

Digitized by Google

PAGE

Presidential campaign; Clay's canvass; Tyler withdraws for Polk, ... 471
Exciting canvass; Clay and the "Liberty party;" explanatory letters about Texas, ... 475
Close election results; New York decides the contest; Polk elected; Clay's bitter defeat, ... 478
Congress reassembles; uniform day fixed for future elections, . 480
Adams carries repeal of "gag-rule;" triumph of personal example, ... 480
Texas annexation and slavery extension; schemes consummated, 481
The true objection to reannexation; Whigs divide in sentiment, 482
Annexation resolution passes House; Senate amends by giving President choice of alternatives, ... 484
Mexican troubles; joint resolution passed and approved, . . 486
Tyler chooses the alternative; immediate union proposed to Texas, 487
Admission of Florida and Iowa; armed occupation, . . . 488
Treaty with China; last vetoes and nominations to office, . . 490
Close of Tyler's administration; his character and personal traits, ... 491

CHAPTER XVIII.

ADMINISTRATION OF JAMES K. POLK.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-NINTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1845–MARCH 3, 1847.

Polk's inauguration; inaugural address; character and antecedents of President, ... 495
Polk as an administrator; his cabinet; offended party factions, 498
Distribution of offices; vacancies filled, ... 501
New official organ; *Globe* sold out; *Daily Union*, ... 502
Andrew Jackson consulted; last days; death of the chieftain, . 503
The Oregon question; conflicting title with Great Britain, . . 504
Convention for joint occupation; Oregon in politics, . . . 508
New emigration to the Columbia; negotiations with British minister, ... 510
Congress assembles and organizes; President's message, . . 511
"Fifty-four forty, or fight;" resolution to terminate joint occupation, ... 512

Digitized by Google

PAGE
British concessions; prompt treaty defining Oregon boundary, . 513
New tariff; American bread-stuffs exported; lower duties; warehouse system, ... 515
New independent treasury act; local banks and currency, . 517
Texas annexed; contempt for Mexico; boundaries kept open, . 518
Annexation leads to war; Taylor's military movements, . . 521
Secret envoy to Mexico; Slidell and his ill success; Mexican commotions, ... 523
Taylor's advance to the Rio Grande; bloodshed; Polk's war message, ... 525
Congress declares war; American sentiment; men and supplies, 527
Kearney seizes New Mexico; conquest of California, . . . 528
Fremont's expedition; revolt of settlers, ... 529
Plans for seizure of California, ... 532
Secret instructions; Commodore Sloat at Monterey and San Francisco, ... 534
Dismembered Mexican provinces occupied, ... 535
Santa Anna's return from exile; takes the head of Mexican army, ... 535
American peace proposals fail; war a serious one, . . . 537
Political troubles of the administration; State elections; the war unpopular, ... 538
Congress reassembles; men and supplies voted; a censorious session, ... 540
Democratic war makes Whig reputations; Taylor; Scott; bill for lieutenant-general defeated, ... 541
Northern equilibrium of power; Iowa and Wisconsin; Wilmot proviso, ... 543
Slavery agitation in the churches; religious statistics, . . 545
Mormon emigration from Illinois to the west of the Rocky Mountains, ... 546
Remote seat of Mexican war; telegraph and postal communications, ... 549

APPENDIX.

A.—Electoral vote by States for President and Vice-President, 1831–1847, ... 551
B.—Length of sessions of Congress, 1831–1847, ... 555
INDEX TO VOLUME FOUR, ... 557

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HISTORY

OF

THE UNITED STATES

UNDER THE CONSTITUTION.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIRST ADMINISTRATION OF ANDREW JACKSON.

SECTION II.

THE UNITED STATES IN 1831.

WE have already delineated some leading traits in the American of 1831: his faith in the fundamentals of popular sovereignty, his sensitiveness to criticism, his incessant zeal in business, his philanthropic tendencies, the lively interest he displayed in religion, the cause of education, and the general diffusion of knowledge. It will be worth our while to pursue this study still farther, and to light up these traits by a brief description of American manners. The human mind and external surroundings act and react constantly upon one another, shaping both personal character and situation. By such action and reaction events are produced; and the stream of events, which is fed by the rills of individual life, sweeps constantly onward, obedient to the law of moral gravity. If manners, then, are an index to the character and situation of a people, nothing which illustrates those manners can be too trivial for the patient regard of history. 1831.

The manners of the age we are describing may be traced in the unconscious self-revelation of the people themselves, often while engaged in the very effort to produce a dif-

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ferent impression. The language, the literature of our American of 1831 was boastful, sometimes bombastic, but at least it brimmed over with hope, energy, and confidence in the splendid experiment he was working out for the benefit and enlightenment of the human race. This attitude to mankind was unfavorable for self-delineation; and it is to intelligent foreigners of the times who brought from abroad some standard of national comparison, and who made an impartial study, that we must look for the proper corrective. Foreigners, many of them, have painted or sketched the picture of our countrymen from time to time; and to French or German visitors—to De Tocqueville and Grund, particularly—we are indebted for philosophic studies of the American democracy at this era, neither wholly accurate nor harmonious, but appreciative and full of suggestion. American literati themselves inclined less to such portrayal; for if they took up the subject at all, they preferred the previous centuries, or else they masqueraded behind some foreign domino. Foreign artists the age doted upon, and, like most folks with better means than taste, the American dearly liked to sit for his portrait. It showed his rawness not less than his vanity, that if the portrait did not flatter he was very angry. Above all other opinions, he seemed sensitive to that of England; and this was not strange, for if one has cut loose from home, be he scapegrace or just rebel, there are none he would so earnestly impress by the grandeur of his new career as those he has left behind. But that very success which put his parent in the wrong disposed the latter to quiz and misdoubt. He laid himself open the more by being too profuse and eager in hospitality to English guests who had books to make; his concern fed their conceit to write him down; and being, after all, a plain cousin of the provincial cut, a laugh was easily raised against him. Delicate sympathy was never the trait of a born Briton when mingling with the men of other lands. Hence the cruel caricature of Captain Hall, and later of Dickens, which Americans resented deeply, because these had been pursued with attentions. Pique

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poisoned the shaft of that bright and neglected little woman, Mrs. Trollope, whose book on American manners of this age was the sharpest satire of all. Coming to Cincinnati through the mouth of the Mississippi on a foolish venture, she took revenge with her quill, and spiced up the life of our greenest of great towns to serve as the sample of all. More hide-bound now, at manhood's age, we may well afford to laugh at the spite or superciliousness of such writers, or else pass on in disdain; for imagine the British lion lashing his tail over the sharp sallies of an Emerson, a Greeley, or a Hawthorne, or Paris and Rome infuriated by the lampoons of Mark Twain. The American of 1831 was yet a youth, serious and susceptible; but something was gained when, as years rolled on, our worst critics became ashamed of their harshness.*

This common resentment of Americans at whatever reflected upon the American character was a sign of national growth; and if no people were more ready to flare up by the millions, none ever forgave more generously when their position was respected. Of English travellers in the United States, a few wrote fairly, but more of them satirically. The first of them all to study our institutions intelligently as continental writers had done was Harriet Martineau of this decade, whose bent being radical, and her sympathies strongly stirred by the anti-slavery crusade, she seemed less just at the time than she really was.

Unquestionably, we were at this time a proud people: proud of the independence we had achieved, of our marvellous advance in wealth and numbers, of our expansive area, of our free and liberal institutions, of our asylum for the oppressed of other lands. And being our own rulers, no other people of the globe could vie with us in the loud and unanimous expression of this patriotic feeling. In these golden days of American eloquence, national pride,

* Dickens in later life, when coming to America to coin an income as a reader, apologized somewhat for his former satire. Anthony Trollope has done the same for his mother, whose scolding satire on this country, by the way, was the foundation of her literary fortune.

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too, was the constant theme of our orators. We wished the people of other countries to pipe to our strain, to feel as we did; but they, if fond of home, were more likely to pick off our foibles. "Our country before all things!" was the cry of ardent Frenchmen. But in America, Decatur's toast was the favorite one, "Our country, right or wrong!" This latter sentiment was the quintessence of idolatry; it reconciled us to evils of national policy against the better angels of our nature, and to that worst of all errors in our constitutional system, the wedlock of freedom and serfdom, which made this republican experiment of ours a monstrous paradox. Union, like an indissoluble marriage, admitted thus no impediment; it was the material necessity of our well-being, our talisman, our fetish.

To unlock American manners at this age one must recall the varied circumstances of local settlement and the heterogeneous elements of which American society was compounded in consequence. Old Dutch customs, which Irving so well describes, had left their trace in Manhattan Island and along the shores of the Hudson; wherever they might congregate, our foreign immigrants, the Irish and Germans in particular, kept up some social observances of the old country; but whatever was most striking and permanent in American manners was chiefly derived from England, the hive of these Atlantic colonies. If we were less provincial than formerly, it was because of habits engendered in our independent and strange surroundings. In most respects the federal government was subordinate to the State in moulding the institutions of local society; but through all, save in the remote frontiers first colonized by the Spanish and French, worked the influence of the English common law, which is a law of custom or of ancient decrees crumbling into custom. Between Northern and Southern society ran the boldest line of demarcation; the West reproducing the habits of that section which dominated in its birth, but with a racier flavor.

The leading feature of American society as a whole was

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its commonplaceness, the unpicturesque level it afforded. And to dwell chiefly upon the average social life in our free States, where the busy hum was loudest, few, very few Americans could afford to indulge in idle leisure. In older centres of fashion, like New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, and in most small towns of colonial pedigree, might be found some ruling social set which nursed its little century of traditions, and skipped the grandfather to quarter their arms among the shadows of remote ancestors in other lands. The ambition of exclusiveness is Anglo-Saxon, if not universal; but the laws and the circumstances of American life deny it a handsome scope. Here one ladder serves for rising, another for descending; laws of inheritance break up a fortune into fragments; the favor of the people is essential to public preferment. As for a leisure class like that in England which the author of "Pelham" described,—men devoted to club life and frivolous pleasure, born to fortunes which they were restrained from consuming, yawning out of bed at noon, and spending the night at balls or gaming-houses, after an hour's lounge in Parliament, to which the pocket borough furnished a seat,—no such class yet existed in America. What inducement had the foreigner of wealth or refined habits to migrate hither? It was for the poor, the industrious, those without large means or influence at home, that this country presented its attraction. Its charm lay in the wide diffusion of public and social opportunities, and the real phenomenon of this American life was that here, beyond every other age or country in the world's history, the mass of common people were intelligent and free. All our fashionable and aristocratic distinctions were but as lace drapery floating out of an open window.

Of American methods in business, we have already spoken.* And again must the reader listen to those sounds of ceaseless activity which in the United States filled each observing stranger with astonishment because it was so earnest and so universal. No one in these free States felt

* Vol. iii, p 514.

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as if he could afford to be idle. Even the best endowed and the best educated, with rare exceptions, pursued some occupation, and our learned professions were full of distinguished men who earned for their families the moderate income. Of all who possessed a fortune scarce one-quarter part had inherited it; the rest gained wealth by their own industry, and after acquiring habits of toil and economy which were seldom abandoned in later life. It cost as much care to keep a fortune as to make it, such were the risks in this ever-moving mass of society. Scarcely feeling that he had laid up enough to retire upon, the American pursued his busy schemes to the last moment; yet for counteracting the miserly tendency in the individual there was always a surrounding atmosphere of social influences to brace him up and make him feel that as a public servant or public benefactor he owed the duty of a good citizen. This regard for public opinion made wealth in America a great lever; rich men did penance for a stingy youth, not in their wills alone, but by liberal gifts to churches, colleges, and hospitals while they lived; and the community, by advertising their good deeds, indirectly added to their store. In a society like ours there was a certain policy in doing good with wealth which fortified the nobler impulses; for religion and charity both depended upon voluntary support; taxation, too, and the whole system of popular government rested upon the wealthier. Wealth emphatically was power; and the newly rich even in the older cities trod close upon the heels of an aristocracy which boasted blood but no money, while in new and robust centres of life their social lead was irresistible. Scholars and professional men already felt the need of their patronage, and though popular honor might consist with honest poverty, private comfort and advantage sought to expand by riches and found a family name. Three rich Americans of this period, all public-spirited and identified with three great cities, were of humble extraction: Girard of Philadelphia, Astor of New York, Lawrence of Boston,—the banker, the real-estate investor, the founder of the cotton-mills.

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Fourier writes of "industrial feudalism" as the master-spirit of the nineteenth century. These barons of industry, of the bank, the mill, or the carrier company, still less of the stock market, had scarcely yet founded their strong castles, though the force of organized capital swept below the surface of business like some hidden current. Monopolies as yet there were none, except perhaps in banking. Occupations were diversified. That minute perfection in a single industry which competition had produced abroad was scarcely known here, but for all other work the American was well adapted. With canals to be dug, towns to be founded and built up, forests cleared away, factories started, mines disemboweled, there was abundance of work from the highest to the humblest, and the Irish bog-trotter who could handle a spade or pickaxe might feel sure of an honest living. One industry fostered another. Consequently, our manners and customs were those of a society hard at work and intent almost to enthusiasm on subduing the material world. Here was to be seen a vast country, much of it still in nature's primeval wilderness, and a vigorous race hacking and hewing in all directions, preparing forest lands for farming, and farm-lands next for a close urban population. Every true citizen carried some speculation in his brain,—a back street which would open up house-lots in his potato-field, a railroad or canal which would bring his town half a day nearer than the next to market, some snug venture with his friends in a coal-mine, a cotton-mill, or a western township. His project was feasible usually if only the country would grow up to it fast enough. So in our patents utility was sought; of perpetual-motion machines little was left, but ingenuity was hard at work upon labor-saving implements for threshing, washing, churning, shelling corn, cutting straw, and the like. Whatever the American took in hand he tried to make productive, to bring out two blades of grass where one had grown before. Nor did he hoard and save like the Dutch, but he invested. Usury laws still prevailed, but our new States allured capital by the allowance of liberal rates of interest, and

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wherever the law was harsh devices were common for evading it. In Cincinnati money might be profitably employed so as to bring from fifteen to twenty-five per cent., and the best mortgages on real-estate security brought ten per cent., against the legal rate of six in New York. Here and throughout the West the barter or truck system was very common, the tailor or grocer paying by due-bills, and the editor collecting his dues in pegged boots or sausage-meat. The dollar, with its convenient decimal, was now fully established in our general currency; and nowhere, said our English traducers, could Americans converse five minutes, in the parlor, the street, or the counting-house, without using that sacred word. But fractions of the dollar less easily found their place; for now, and for at least twenty years longer, the shilling and the two- and three-pence played a confusing part in the small retail trade. A New England shilling was six, and a New York shilling eight, to the dollar; while at the West they called this New York shilling a bit, and the sixpence a picayune. Spanish small coin struggled for recognition with our federal silver, and the smooth Spanish ninepence, or twelve and a half cents, was reduced to a dime by scratching a cross on the back.

"Such unity of purpose and sympathy of feeling," writes the pert Mrs. Trollope, "nowhere else exist, except, perhaps, in an ant's nest." And certainly, with all his conscientious zeal and diligence, the average American at the North had somewhat of that unfeeling nature which science now imputes to King Solomon's pattern insect. Europeans might be compelled to frugality, but he was thrifty on principle. He laid heavy burdens upon man or beast in his employ, and exacted all the law allowed him in his own household. No duty was neglected, no decency overlooked, and yet discipline yielded little to tenderness. Sons and daughters pushed out when they could from the family nest, dutiful in their turn more than loving, each seeking one's own experience of life, unrestrained by parental counsel or example. With the increasing luxury of city life we shall see households of two

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or three children in place of the twelve or fifteen to which rural life was accustomed, and parents spoiling their young offspring by indulgence, and renewing their own anxious ambition in these easier lives. But the desire of change, of something better, was incessant. There was no deep root anywhere. "I do not know an American," said Talleyrand, "that has not sold his horse or dog;" and were it church, historical hall, or the family homestead, no building had associations so sacred or so tender that our countryman would not sell it for a good price, and let it be torn down before his very eyes. In comparison with the people of other countries whose lines of life ran parallel, he attached himself to nothing and nobody except to his wife and children, his work, and the soil which afforded him an immediate living. While the Frenchman—so Chevalier observed—must have society, the Yankee feels at ease in solitude, with only his domestic companions, and thus was accomplished that marvel of these days, the civilization of the West. Nor was this anxious, restless spirit confined to the pioneer existence, but it was visible everywhere. If not at work, our American sat uneasily: he would stretch his legs over the mantel-piece or a chair; he would whittle with his jack-knife, drum with his hands, whistle to himself, and keep his jaws grinding tobacco, whose juice he squirted out as though he had a mark to reach. Competition and his unsettled and changeful surroundings kept him nervous, lest he should waste a moment.

Stock-jobbing was now settling into a regular pursuit in our principal cities; but speculations on 'change were not very frequent, and, as the press made little note of such matters, there was a mystery about the pursuit. Capital found a legitimate employment, and they who would venture their small savings on hidden chances might try the lottery, a business, however, which the chief Northern States soon joined in suppressing.*

* Massachusetts was deeply stirred in 1833 on this subject by the embezzlement of a bank officer who held over twenty-three hundred chances in various lotteries, on which the bank realized less than twenty dollars. 44 Niles, 37.

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The seriousness and inquietude which we have remarked shaded the American's home and social life. He did not, like his English progenitor, throw off business cares at the close of the day and take his ease in comforts of the table and jovial discourse. His dining hour and heartiest meal was wedged in between two tough stretches of work which his mind could not disconnect; so he would bolt down hot meats and pudding or pastry, one after another, vexed if his women had not set the table on the stroke of the clock, after which he sallied forth to business again. Haste, added to his voracious appetite for incongruous and indigestible things, fostered dyspepsia, the national complaint. Table conversation under such conditions savored too much of domestic strife or worry; but more likely preoccupation over the dollars induced silence and hushed the prattle of the little ones. Our American habit appeared to the most disadvantage in the lesser hotels and boarding-houses where homeless merchants and clerks took their meals and young couples sprouted into the nuptial life together. The bell or the gong sounded, and the whole company flew madly down-stairs, scrambled into their seats at the long table, and began to feed voraciously, as though but half had been provided for. One of the homeless emptied a dish of dainties on his plate and repeated the action when another was brought, oblivious of his neighbors. Dishes rattled, the golden butter was slashed at, waiters bustled in and out, two-pronged forks were uplifted, steel knife-blades flew into open mouths, and scarcely a sound was heard but the gurgle of eating and drinking. In five minutes the first man rose, in twelve most others followed, and the whole dinner, including dessert, lasted scarcely more than fifteen minutes. Such was the scene as many a foreign eye-witness described it from memory, not often coloring it too highly. Even in the home-circle a host would betray the calculating drift in the midst of his hospitality by discussing with his wife before the guest the cost of the green peas or sweet-potatoes.

The American table was profuse in these times with

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meat served three times a day, a variety of vegetables, among which the tomato took the lead, and luscious fruits, such as pears, apples, peaches, berries, and melons. But fruit was seldom eaten at the table when it could be carried off and munched in the midst of work. The dessert, which was quickly despatched without clearing the cloth, consisted mostly of puddings and pies, of which Americans were inordinately fond; but soup seemed too little of a treat by itself and too much with other things, nor were second courses often served. Apples might be prepared in many ways, and every housewife prided herself upon her cakes, jellies, and sweetmeats of various kinds which graced the evening meal, feeling pained if any of them were passed over. Our culinary art, though clever, had, however, little variety, for good cooks were hard to get, and there was a prejudice against dishes with French names; and as domestic service was the one problem of American life which defied a woman's solution, the burden of the household fell heavily upon the mistress, who would exchange recipes and reciprocate woes with her intimate friends, not seriously repining at her consequence. With English tradition at the root, a new country adapted its own dishes, such as the baked beans, chowder, and fish-balls of New England, and our many preparations of maize or rye, like brown-bread, Indian-pudding, and the johnny-cake of various names. American food in 1831 was abundant more than delicate; one saw bacon and beefsteaks at morning, noon, and night, varied with fowls and fish of various kinds, and cold meats for supper; food was heaped up and mixed together in one plate, and the English cockney shuddered to see a New Yorker churning up boiled eggs, butter, salt, and pepper in a glass tumbler at his breakfast.

In most cities the solid householder might be seen at early dawn strolling through the market and purchasing the day's supplies, enjoying real exercise and the fresh range of life, and keeping abreast with the prices. One carried his own market-basket in these days, and shamed the son, who dodged through the lanes and back alleys,

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lest he should be seen carrying home the turkey. This national fowl had the pre-eminence on all company occasions; nor, perhaps, was the tale amplified of that honored traveller who, when feasted from house to house for three months, had roast turkey for dinner every day. Turtle was plentiful in the New York market, but not well dressed; venison was apt to be dry; and nearly everywhere beef and pork were preferred to mutton. The canvas-back duck of Chesapeake Bay was our greatest delicacy, from which region came oysters, terrapin, and Potomac shad, all in high esteem with good livers. But our people had too little means or leisure to set up for epicures; and what with their table manners, their shop-talk, their constant cigar, their glass of spirits and water at the bar in preference to the social decanter and mahogany, it was not strange if the British middle class, the most supercilious in the world when away from home, pronounced them intolerable.

There was, in truth, little recreation in our Northern society at this period, little of the polish and ornament of life. This held most true of the West and our upstart towns; for among the older population of the East there were various intelligent sets, where culture and refinement took the lead. The Philadelphia "Wistar parties" brought local celebrities together; New York literati met at "the lunch;" Boston had good repute in the art of high converse and hot suppers; there were choice libraries here and there, mostly of the subscription sort, besides those attached to the chief seminaries of advanced learning. We had some general societies for music, art, and sciences; but of club-life on the whole one found very little, even in the larger centres. Society had a prejudice against clubs of the English pattern. Americans lived at home for the most part, and the source of their sterling qualities was the domestic virtue. This home attachment made them earnest in business, confirmed them in virtue, and brought the powerful incentive of family affection to bear upon a career in life. The evening call at one an-

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other's house made the chief diversion of life; and to take out the starch of such dissipation and put neighbors at their ease by bright talk, merry romps, or simple refreshment was the acme of successful hospitality. Ill at ease in the best seats of horse-hair and mahogany, the men folk were apt to drone, talk produce, or get into some disputatious argument (a common failing), as their feet scraped the ingrained carpet; but our women showed superior grace, and by universal consent were genial and polite. In place of dinner-parties society gathered for a tea, to which, perhaps, the pastor or the sewing-circle gave a definite aim, and if the sexes herded at first in opposite corners of the parlor, the massive meal brought them together. High value was set on morality and sobriety in this country: every one had a reputation to gain or keep. The Protestant Sabbath was calm and restful; attired in best clothes, young and old of the family sallied forth to public prayer at the pealing of the bells, and each pew gathered its tribe; in New York city chains were still put across some of the streets that the devotion of churchgoers might not be disturbed. One rest-day in the week broke the routine of the other six. Holidays came but seldom. Merry sleigh-bells were heard in midwinter, chiefly by night, however; and though a family airing might be taken by the more affluent in the long summer afternoons, the chaise, the carryall, the horseback ride subserved more commonly the uses of business, and like the stage-coach or the "Lady Jackson" and "Lady Washington" omnibuses of brilliant hue which raced through Broadway, saved time which the citizen might well have given for the sake of his health to a free tramp in the open air. In various ingenious ways was a rustic frolic made the means of co-operative work where hired laborers were scarce, as in the husking-parties of New England, where young and old turned out to strip the ears of corn, regaled on gingerbread and new cider. This constant drive to be up and doing Europe much commiserated, but to our countrymen it was a source of chief happiness.

The American of this age was renowned above all other

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nations of the world in open courtesy to the fair sex. Woman had the best seat in the stage-coach and steamboat and at the public table; wherever she appeared it was "Gentlemen, make room for the ladies," and she might safely travel from one end of the Union to the other with her purity her sufficient weapon. Open debauchery and rudeness to women were here punished socially, irrespective of the law; and so, too, a man's attentions were taken as in earnest, and if he trifled he lost caste by it. Woman, in response, kindled a genuine flame, and submitted to matrimony as her lot, despising the name of jilt. The almost universal practice was to marry from choice, marry for love, and when married rear a family. That freedom of intercourse in the society of young people, which so surprised the English and French, whose custom was to make matches for their sons and daughters, suited the modes of parents who meant that their children should make or mar their own lives. Parental influence in such affairs was prudently exerted, for both sexes of American youth took their own counsel, and insisted on finding out hearts for themselves. Father and mother took the bedroom candle quietly up the back stairs, and left the best parlor to the daughters and their beaux. Home-life and the nursling brood withdrew young married folks from society, nor did they return much to it except for the sake of children and in an altered capacity. The American mother devoted herself to home and offspring, and to her daughter especially she was companion, tutor, and guide. Girls were kept in school longer, often, than boys; and the danger was that in taste and refinement they would exceed the sphere of their opportunities. Their eagerness developed, as they grew up, to embellish and rearrange the household and parental manners until their better conceptions could bloom in homes of their own. Boston possessed many clever women whose conversation was agreeable to men of letters; but from New York to the cities southward graceful accomplishments and personal charms bore the palm. Matrimony, however, clapped the extinguisher upon the belle, not less than the dandy. No

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flower on earth was so fair as that of our American girl just budding into maidenhood; but the stem was delicate, and maternal cares and household worry, like a canker, soon corroded the petals of her beauty. Yet marriage was held sacred to the end, and woman served the safeguard of man's chastity and her own. External morals and decency no people more sedulously kept. Women of dissolute life rarely flaunted themselves in the boldest of our cities, and even the quadroon of the Crescent city was modest and refined in manners, and constant, too, did her lover permit it. Men pencilled gross thoughts in public places, and then refrained; immoral books and pictures were neither seen nor talked about; and the deep concealment of vice in the community lessened infinitely the temptation to it. But in the conscious pride of her own moral worth and safety woman inclined somewhat to prudery; the corset could not be named to ears polite, and Philadelphia ladies roamed by pairs through the statuary hall, and fled at the sound of a male footstep. Up to 1830 women had taken no part in public affairs, not even the temperance reform bringing their rare energy for details into play. It was Garrison's abolition movement, reinforced in some sense by Emerson and the transcendental school, as we shall observe hereafter, that first engaged their open co-operation with men, and started the ball for what our cant phrase reckons as "women's rights." As yet our fair sex kept to the home sphere and private seclusion, unless, indeed, misfortune forced one to earn a livelihood, in which event she turned to millinery, dressmaking, or, if genteel, took a few boarders,—in teaching, however, always finding a congenial pursuit. Her spirit revolted against service in strange households, that pursuit of all others for which women are capable while capable women are sought in vain; it mattered little that instead of being servants such were "help;" though in country inns, where her freedom was greater, she might often be found waiting upon the table. Our American woman submits to all drudgery but that which makes her an inferior in the home of another of her own sex. As for

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the bright daughters of New England farmers, all eager to be independent, our modern machinery, with its iron, rigid fingers, was clutching up one after another of those various little industries which they once pursued quietly at home, forcing the children of want from modest firesides into the modern maelstrom of a manufacturing town.

American theatres, as the reader has inferred, did not greatly prosper even yet. Besides the absorption in business and home life, religious prejudice had to be encountered, for many still thought the stage immoral, and sectarian pulpits planted their batteries against it. About this time ten theatres stood open in the five leading cities north of New Orleans, and of these only one, and that in New York City, really prospered. Puritan squeamishness long drew the line at museums with a stage annex, thus avoiding that appearance of evil which was more to many minds than the evil itself. In the gay Crescent City the French and English had each a play-house. Our theatrical audiences looked vulgar, owing in part to the fashion of seating them; the boxes and rear circle being then occupied by ladies and the high-priced gentility who did not mount to the gallery, while the cheap and ill-dressed—men and mechanics for the most part—filled the body of the house, or pit, as it was called, a name which supplied those who preached down the theatre with many a sulphurous metaphor. These occupants of the pit, some in their shirt-sleeves, diverted attention by whistling while the curtain was down, jeering at the supes who prepared the stage, and stamping their feet when the orchestra played march-music. As for the performances, those most patronized were by English stars like the Kembles, Woods, and Drakes; the elder Booth and Forrest were American favorites in tragedy, while Hackett, the comedian, shone as Nimrod Wildfire in the "Raw Kentuckian, or Lion of the West." Most of the sterling plays performed here were borrowed from the English stage; for our native dramas, with their double-headed titles, had too much of the blood-and-thunder element for even a Bowery audience

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to endure. John Bull was abused on the stage to the glory of Columbia, and so intense was the national feeling that an English performer who spoke disrespectfully of America on the voyage over might expect to be mobbed.

The fall of 1825 saw the Italian opera first introduced into the United States under auspices never to be forgotten; for Garcia's young daughter, in after years the peerless Malibran, was brought out at the Park Theatre in Rossini's "Barber of Seville," which won for her in America's chief city those romantic triumphs, first-fame and a husband. Other troupes followed in various seasons, with Fanti and Bordogni among the chief singers; and soon went up in New York an Italian opera house more pretentious than any American theatre then existing. High admission-prices, however, and high salaries caused all such projects to languish: opera was a luxury too dainty yet for our palate. The simple concerts, vocal or instrumental, paid expenses better; ballad singers were in demand; and the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, the pioneer in oratorio music, was privileged to perform Sunday nights in a city which shut up all theatres at Saturday's sundown.

Americans showed much fondness for music, without as yet much culture or taste. The singing-school, that Cupid's conservatory, trained the young of both sexes to take their part in the church choir, or join in the psalmody of the social circle. Music, religious or secular, as might happen, was a parlor amusement. Girls took their turn with the guitar, piano, or harpsichord; young men of sentiment played the flute; those who thought themselves unequal to a solo fell in at the chorus. At the ball or evening party of the upper ten, hands joined in the quadrille or country dance; but round dances the fair declined on their own or their mothers' disapproval. Waltzing appears to have been first ushered into our society at a Washington ball in 1826, where a German baron, who was the most conspicuous performer in the room, whirled through his orbits so skilfully with a large pair of spurs on his heels that his partner and the other dancers suffered no impedi-

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ment. Thirty years scarcely made this dance popular at the North, for it seemed improper to women, and exacted of the men more training than they cared to give. Card-playing was considered by many a vice. The sterner sex had sports of their own. The voluntary parade of political club or masonic lodge, of militia or fire-engine company, lent an imposing visage to many a bloodless celebration. Torchlight processions came in vogue as early as the Presidential canvass of 1836; and not unfrequently the Jackson Blues, the Washington Grays, and the Bolivar Fencibles would exchange civic visits, their uniforms contrasting like a bed of tulips. In these blank-cartridge and knife-and-fork encounters of lovely peace titles were won; every tenth man who was not doctor or judge seemed to have some military handle to his name. Lastly, for recreation, the cattle or mechanics' fair must not be forgotten, nor the spruce exhibition, always with its hint at combining instruction. The automaton chess-player, with an ingenious puzzle to be solved, drew interested crowds, and careful mothers took their children to see wax-works, the learned pig, and the sagacious elephant, or paid their half-price to the mimic war-scenes of Moscow, Bunker Hill, or Navarino, whose lurid climax was a never-failing delight. A novel combustion amusement was afforded by the pandemonium which a Frenchman attached to his wax-work show in Cincinnati; where, by some contrivance of wire springs and an electrical machine, demons might be seen, with dwarfs growing into giants, and reptiles devouring their young.

Neither the training nor the prepossessions of our social life favored yet a broad and hearty sense of humor. Americans were not to be amused at trifles, like Frenchmen; they did not cultivate hilarity at the chief meal as the English did, nor laugh loyally at Punch and Judy or the Christmas pantomime because their forefathers did; they required a point, something more than brutal thwacks and blows, to excite their merriment. Merry people in general have little to do with the ambition of bettering their condition or influencing affairs; mirth is for spectators, not

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actors in events. But in caricature and sarcasm the American compared well with older tribes, and, like the Briton he sprung from, enjoyed a laugh keenly when at the expense of others and not of himself. The half-alligator Kentuckian, the Knickerbocker, the paddy from Cork, the plantation Jim Crow, were already fresh and local types among us which gave one set the opportunity to ridicule another; and when Jack Downing came out in print about 1833, followed soon after by Sam Slick, the down-east Yankee was a real creation. American caricature, however, lay in the apothegm; it had not yet pictorial merit, nor in wide America was pictorial art to be found at all. The taste for painting and sculpture is always less spontaneous than that for music, as the Ethiopian minstrel can attest. No native artist of renown is to be added to our former list;* no public gallery, no school of art existed even in the thriftiest seats of population. The man of rising means hung his darkened parlor about with canvas daubs of himself, his wife, and each new son or daughter, adding his own bust, perhaps, if covered with riches or honor; black profiles and miniatures served the less affluent; but of fine landscapes or historical scenes there were few. Romish mummery was objected to the saints and madonnas of the great masters; and two paintings representing Adam and Eve before and after the fall, which were exhibited about the country, had to be called a scriptural show in order to justify the scant attire. The American Art Union, a pioneer in this new decade, for promoting the fine arts, made a lottery of its best pictures, distributing among the members besides a copy of some fine engraving; there were earlier academies of art founded in two or three cities, but they did not prosper. Architecture fared somewhat better, though suffering from ill taste and economy; a church, erected as all churches here were with private means, was likely, if grandeur were aimed at, to be finished off with a sham steeple or a sham perspective of pillars behind the pulpit. Houses and stores were built with close regard to the rate of profit on the investment.

* Vol. ii, p. 265 (1809).

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Science and natural history must have strongly attracted a people whose minds were given to exploring the deeper mysteries of human existence; and it was an adroit plea which Fanny Wright worked into her infidel harangues, that the money now spent upon church establishments ought to be put into observatories and the diffusion of science. But America was too busy to give more than a desultory glance at such studies and pick up information at haphazard in the leisure hour. Many a town had its museum of curiosities, where were exhibited sea-shells, stuffed birds, local relics, and the oddities of East India voyages, besides monstrosities of various sorts, none of which could compare with Peale's famous mastodon. A Yale graduate who had attended Professor Silliman's lectures started town associations for popular improvement. Hence the lyceum, on a plan first adopted by the citizens of Millbury, a Massachusetts town, in 1826, and endorsed by a Boston convention soon after in which Webster and Everett took part.* This institution, distinct, of course, from the learned societies, was propagated in New England, the Middle States, and Ohio, the original idea being to diffuse scientific knowledge through classes, lectures, and the interchange of views. But the popular lecture system, soon moulded into one of general culture by Emerson and others, who took this field for a living, became a great power presently in moral agitation. The pulpit had its bounds, and so, too, had the stump; but the platform, free to every one who could collect a miscellaneous audience, soon stirred the torpid life of provincial society.

Americans were imitators in manners, partly as a result of their colonial origin, but more still because we were a modern people, and the modern life of all civilized countries tends to one pattern. As for dress, none of those distinct garbs were to be seen among us which have identified the common peasantry abroad through so many generations; or none at least that were not the oddity of

* Cooke's Life of Emerson.

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some sect, like the Shakers, or of the individual. Whether in boddice or sleeves, or the great calash which in these days shielded her modest face like the cup of a hollyhock, woman copied the latest fashion of London or Paris, and the cobbler's wife copied the dress of the merchant's. Dress was not the badge of superiority so much as of respectability, though in many a trist town, were it not for the Sunday worship and prayer-meetings, the fair sex, to quote Mrs. Trollope, might as well have made a bonfire of their best bonnets. Where birth and rank make no permanent distinction, one must dress well to keep in style, and by all odds the Americans were the best dressed common people in the world, showing good taste even in economy. In language and conversation, too, no common people evinced such intelligence. College and literary circles had their priggish affectation, and better still, their classic scholarship and good-breeding. But the average capacity to impart information was a trait far more striking than the culture and attainment of individual minds; and Americans of all classes could express themselves with amazing point and clearness on all subjects within the range of personal experience. The habit of thought was direct and practical, and good sense dominated in their dealings. One could learn more from an American farmer or mechanic than from twenty bulbous Britons of the same pursuit, whose mouths could scarcely open without disclosing prejudice and vulgarity. As for provincialism in language, there was far less of it than when the nineteenth century opened. No rustic dialect, no cockney aspirate betrayed the indelible birthmark; foreign idioms were washed out quickly in the public schools; language, like manners, improved as one rose in life, and nothing seemed fixed and durable in American speech but a good English vernacular which was pronounced with a mouth more flexible the more remote they dwelt southward from the New England States, where its utterance was most like the mother-tongue, but hard and with a nasal twang. Those different terms of expression most nearly betrayed one's sectional origin, "I guess," "I suspect," "I reckon,"

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or "I calculate," which unlike the English "you know," marked the subdued and yet self-sufficient habit of thought in Americans the least conventional. "Go ahead!" the American would call out, where the Englishman would say "All right!" which indicated, perhaps, his more impetuous haste. The queried "Yes?" or "No?" expressed in a monosyllable a full apprehension of what one was told without committing the hearer's opinion; and this once more was characteristic.

Our sketch of American manners in 1831 is not complete without a local hint or two to fill up the outline. Of all our municipal centres of population, New York took the lead, secure in a well-earned pre-eminence. This city, with its population numbering 202,000 souls by the census of 1830, was already the chief mart of American trade and commerce, though without as yet a single inch of railway track or telegraph wire to grapple to her the converging interests of a continent. But for the National Bank at Philadelphia, this city was the financial centre of the Union besides. Favored with a bright and invigorating climate, with a firm mainland thrusting its fat foot towards a spacious bay, into which poured a great inland river; with a spacious harbor safe for ships to anchor in at all seasons of the year, with remarkable facilities for wharves, with a geographical situation unrivalled as a distributing centre; all these advantages New York City had immensely enhanced in the past twenty years by means of the steamboat and canal enterprises which were developed by native genius and capital in the State, unaided from without. The slanting sails were seen on the horizon at Sandy Hook as great packets approached or departed; water-craft of various sizes, which bore aloft the red or black smoke-stack, puffed and paddled around the Battery or across the ferries from daylight till dark or later; the island, with its lively scenes of turmoil, seemed fenced in behind a forest of bare masts, which stretched for three miles or more along a range of wooden piers on ither side of the city,—simple, indeed, by comparison

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with the massive quays of London, yet constantly increasing to meet the new demands of commerce along a good seven miles of water-front. Under such magic prosperity New York was fast outgrowing the condition of a thrifty town with Dutch habits. Those ancient Dutch houses of diminutive brick, exposing their portly gables to the street, which had been built with steps on the battlement walls, so that the burgher, as tradition ran, might mount his roof and set his weathercock by the wind, had nearly disappeared. Hardly five hundred buildings here antedated the peace of 1783; new ones were added constantly; and the old cabbage-gardens, once on the outskirts of the town, were cut up and sold by the square foot. New York had already less of the provincial tone about it than any other city in the Union. Less foreign and incoherent than either New Orleans or Washington, it showed the American at his most advanced stage towards the wide-awake citizen of the world. Here the immigrant, and chiefly the Irishman, was apt to linger, and natives of all sections, as well as foreigners, struggled in the whirlpool of human life to gain the shore, keep afloat, or sink under the wave of vice and pauperism. Though it was a shop-keeping, a mercantile life, its liberal opportunities made men more disposed to spend than elsewhere, and the craving was greater to dissipate and be amused. This was a bright, sunny city. New Yorkers made much of show and style for Americans; they paid most freely for their amusements; they pushed down towards Pearl, Broad, and Wall streets in the morning, and up-town again at three in the afternoon; drove on the trot, took late dinners, were always moving, and always moved fast. The omnibuses darted through Broadway, the main artery of the city, and carts in the lower streets were always getting in and out of a tangle. Brick buildings were painted red or a lively cream color, with white lines in the seams, which gave a fresh and cheerful look to the streets not to be seen in other cities. Those houses on Waverley or Lafayette Place, with Corinthian pillars and marble steps, marked the high-tide of up-town fashion. Ladies, elegantly dressed

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and bearing parasols of various colors, went shopping or made calls in a handsome coach, with a crest on the panel and an Irish or negro driver in bright livery mounted on the box. Colors heightened the bright effect in the great thoroughfares. One could stroll along Broadway by day or night and gaze into the shop windows, admiring the well-painted signs and the goods which were boldly exposed for sale in the door-way, and through the throng hearing the street-cries of "ice" or "hot corn;" or he might saunter down to the Battery in the summer evenings to gaze on the salt water by moonlight, while the cricket chirped among the trees which lined the streets, a sound only less strange to European ears than the loud bull-frog concert in some suburban village; or on a bright afternoon he would be tempted to take the steamboat and cross the East River to the quiet little town of Brooklyn, or the North River to Hoboken Park, the poor man's pleasure-ground, where the red squirrel climbed and chattered. But New York had its strong contrasts; and the "Five Points," a quarter of filth and wretchedness, was like the "Seven Dials" of London. Churches abounded in New York of every creed and denomination; and assemblies, balls, concerts, and tea-parties, not to add the theatre, vied with the sober attractions of home. Bowling-saloons and oyster-cellars with curtained boxes were among the night attractions. One caught on to society, so to speak, as a crowded omnibus; riches gave the passport, sooner or later; and the more the metropolis grew the more it appeared as if in this medley of inhabitants the richest and the most influential had begun life poor and friendless. Natives of the United States made at least three-fourths of the population here collected; but scarcely a third part, it is probable, first saw the light on this island, where Dutch, English, Irish, Scotch, and French stocks were all transplanted, and none took a quicker or deeper root than that of the keen New Englander.

In this hotchpot of inhabitants gathered promiscuously under an almost Italian sky, yellow fever of late had sometimes broken out in the summer, so that the doctors learn-

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edly discussed whether the action of the tide-water upon the wooden piers might not breed disease. Poor sanitary arrangements had more, however, to do with it; for New York was by no means a cleanly city, and no complete system of water or sewerage yet existed. Offal was thrown from private houses into the streets, and brown hogs spotted over with black blotches perambulated the whole neighborhood of the City Hall, feasting greedily upon the refuse stuff which streamed down the open gutters, and discomposing the crowd of coaches and pedestrians near the curb-stone. Croton water had been discussed for years, but the first cost seemed an insuperable barrier, until constant fire-alarms and the clang of church-bells and the rattle and uproar of engines and firemen, which made night hideous in those times, culminated in the flaming disaster of 1835. Cholera visited this city in the summer of 1832, brought over by an English emigrant ship. Nearly 3000 persons died of the dread distemper in two summer months, or about half of the whole number who were taken sick. That was the year of the Presidential election. People with means fled to the country, and Broadway for weeks was quiet as a village street; but when the pestilence had passed, the whirl of business and pleasure began once more, like some vast toy whose clock-work runs down and is wound up again. New York fashion gradually drew to the highest and healthiest land, which was equally removed from the two rivers.

Philadelphia and Boston warded off the cholera of that year by timely and sensible precautions. These cities, both of which were neatly kept by comparison with New York, maintained long those homogeneous traits which had always distinguished them. Philadelphians, prim and methodical to a fault, never tired of scouring off their marble steps in the morning, and retiring behind the barricade of wooden shutters at night; simple, slow, and monotonous in their ways, but always increasing in worldly substance. Philadelphia was the most provincial city of its size in all America. Boston, which rose out of the sea, a pleasing pyramid spiked about with church

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steeples and capped on the top with the State House dome, designed by Bulfinch, showed more taste and originality than the Quaker City at the very first glance. Scorning that dull pattern of checker-board expansion, Bostonians showed their better ingenuity by planning crooked streets, which it took some intelligence to thread, and reclaiming marshy lands from the salt water. The caprice of old families fixed the fashionable quarter from time to time, and kept the rest of the flock tumbling behind. American tradesmen did not live at their places of business, as in Europe; hence a multiplicity of signs in the business quarter, and of all gilt-lettered signs Boston's were the brightest. Boston was the cleanest and best governed city in the Union, and justly proud of its Common, its granite market-house, and its suburban drives, all of which were then unrivalled in America. Here, too, was the focus of a brilliant intellectual life. Both Philadelphia and Boston went steadily on in wealth and numbers, though New York, like a weasel, sucked out the choicest eggs of their commerce; for these cities had manufactures to nourish and develop, and each, besides, was the trade-centre for a populous back-country. Baltimore, the third city of the Union at this time in point of numbers, and outstripping Boston as a prolific breeder, was noted for its sociable sons and beautiful daughters. All of these three Atlantic cities were chiefly built of sober brick, unpainted.

But the phenomenon of American development was the growth of the great West. Solitude and privation founded this most typical civilization. Two or three hundred farmers, who dwelt far apart in little log cabins, with scarce a human companion outside the family nest, sowed the seed of happy towns and villages, many of which had sprung up and blossomed before the founder's eyes. These barons of the quarter-section, settling upon acres which cost often the last dollars one could scrape together, would put up each his miserable hut, and proceed to cut and clear and plant Indian-corn, with no ready capital but a few blankets, a skillet, rifle, and axe, and the

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two-horse wagon which brought him many a day's journey with his family. A strong arm and a stout heart, a loving helpmate, and God over all, these were his dependence and his thought, as he waded through the long grass wet with evening dews, his gun on his shoulder, bringing home the game which served for food. Hundreds sank under the exposure, for fever and ague exhaled from those undrained swamps, and no doctor was near to relieve the wife in childbirth or set the broken leg; but they who bore such privations grew tough and wiry in the out-of-door life. What wonder, then, that the Western patriarch who had once carried his grain twelve miles to be ground grew to be proud and even boastful when population pressed about him, and he had wealth, influence, and the comforts of life for his last years? This pride and boastfulness still permeated Cincinnati, that first settlement in this modern world, which in twenty-five years had grown from an acorn of the forest wild into a thriving city of more than 30,000 inhabitants; for though first settled in 1789, it was not laid out with building-lots until 1808. This "wonder of the West," this "prophet's gourd of magic growth," this "infant Hercules," whose slope ascended from the crowded river-front beyond the city to a beautiful amphitheatre of encircling hills, had already the appearance of a large, industrious, and well-arranged city, in spite of the down-hill drainage, the hog-infested alleys, the streams running red with slaughter-house blood, as Mrs. Trollope described the realm of this hoyden queen. Geographical position and business relations with North and South made Cincinnati naturally conservative in political sentiments; but the controlling spirit was Northern, and the anchorage in a free State. Here the propensity was for new faces, new recruits in the hive to tread the honeycomb; and in the ceaseless welcome to the stranger less space was afforded for knitting the ties which bound tried comrades together.

This Western boastfulness and push, and ready hospitality, which gave to our expanding Union a new type of character, was not much longer to effervesce chiefly in

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Cincinnati. Another star, and a brighter, beamed on the horizon at the far-distant lake and prairie of Northeastern Illinois. But Chicago realized as yet only the forecast of a great destiny. A wooden village, crowded to excess, and clustering close to the guns of Fort Dearborn, whose stars and stripes were emblems of the Great Father with whom the Pottawatomies had come to treat for their removal beyond the Mississippi; the town where these Indians danced the war-dance and ran howling through the streets, humored where once they terrified; such was Chicago as late as 1833. But there was already a great speculation on foot, and its white inhabitants were convinced that here was the germ of an immense city. Fairs were held, horses traded off, new steamboat-lines projected,—in fine, Chicago was already a vast sutler shop for dispensing among those large settled tracts and townships to the south and west tea, coffee, sugar, and other supplies brought through the great lakes from Detroit. St. Louis, far beyond the Mississippi, completed the present group of Western cities; anciently settled, French in origin, pro-slavery by adoption, having a speckled population and elements adverse to a generous development. But a new St. Louis had already sprung up near the old one, and fine limestone warehouses fronted the river. In this emporium of trans-Mississippi settlements and world's end the Northern spirit predominated, and for ten years its denizen had been ready to put his thumb on the map and brag that, as St. Louis stood at the centre of the American Union, it would some day be the capital of the nation. Illinois was in 1831 the swarming State for free settlers, though a thin line of pioneers had advanced up the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, two thousand miles west of our Union frontiers as bounded when Jefferson was chosen President, and already the Rocky Mountains seemed scarcely more remote from civilization than the Alleghanies had been a century before.

Most American cities in this day were paved with stone in the principal streets, while a flag or brick sidewalk elevated the foot-passengers on either side. Anthracite or

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the soft smouldering coal of Pennsylvania superseded the blazing wood as neighboring forests were cleared. Gas by 1830 had come into general use in New York City, and the long line of Broadway stores lit up by night was thought one of the most brilliant and rarest sights in all America. But gas was a luxury; and oil, with wax or tallow candles, served most purposes of illumination elsewhere. Soap and candles were commonly manufactured at home, and in washing much use was made of water run off wood-ashes; but in many places wood-ashes and the fat offal from meat were exchanged by the household for soap and candles which the maker supplied.

Such is the picture of American life and manners in 1831. As in the traits we have delineated, it is most of all the picture sketched by intelligent and good-natured Europeans, who could compare things here with what they had at home. A richer life, not without deeper throes of the Democratic passion, was in store for the decade just beginning; a wider variety of national experience, gained by changed methods of administration, closer intercourse, concentration at municipal points, and the attrition of travel. In the ideal of popular rule under our republican system was to be felt, perhaps, the worst shock; every government ought to present a lofty ideal to the imagination, and nurture patriotism by its own exalted example. Influences in America were many; but of all the influences which moulded and dominated this Northern society the New England influence was strongest. But the native of the Eastern section failed of popularity with the rest of the Union; he could not easily allay jealousy of his talents by the charm of personal example. He was intellectual more than sympathetic; radical and revolutionary by instinct; repressive where he tried to prove his conservatism. Hence New England on her original soil was a sort of educator, a great generator of ideas for American society, which, nevertheless, leaders in other sections had to embody in practical reforms and carry into final accomplishment, whose forbearing temper and

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kindlier sympathy with the popular modes and foibles qualified them better for practical administration on a national scale.

We have scarcely touched upon the Southern life and manners of this period. That subject will recur in connection with negro slavery, an institution which was fast fashioning this great fraction of the American people into a distinct community of tastes, habits, and character alien to their Northern brethren and to all that made our prodigious strides in wealth and numbers remarkable. Miss Martineau well observed at this period that South and North did not understand one another; that the one section thought a constant contest was going on at the North between property and pauperism, while the other believed every Southerner maltreated his slaves, who were all ready to revolt. But it was also true that the South, while repelling all free settlements with free labor, graded by the same logic her own civilization. Here the instinct to keep up the gentleman in social life scorned retail trade and all honest livelihood by manual labor; habits of idle lounging and dissipation were common to whites of every grade, and each affront, just or unjust, had to be resented under the code of honor. The Southerner rode well and hunted, but he could not hang a broken door; he had to go North for a tutor, for school-books, and for every invention besides that could increase the crops from his plantation. There were Southern jurists and statesmen still in these later days, but not a respectable Southern name could be found in American literature or the useful arts. Alston alone was famed as a painter. But the most pregnant fact to notice in this connection is the decline of Virginia's influence; the Old Dominion posed still as before a looking-glass, but led the South no longer, still less the nation. To her place of leadership in this section succeeded South Carolina, high-strung and impetuous, the veriest slavocrat in the Union, having a dash of fiery knighthood. Fatal moment for the South when the slaveholder lifted the banner of propagandism under this new Rupert of a leader.

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Massachusetts, with stern Puritan visage, stood forth as of old to utter the oracles of the Almighty. Two centuries after Cromwell's usurpation, on soil settled by the English colonists of his day, broke out a new civil strife between Cavalier and Roundhead, while the great conservative population that stood between them exhausted every effort to preserve the time-honored institutions of society by compact and negotiation. Let us now approach the epoch of this struggle, taking up once more the long-parted cord of our narrative.

SECTION III.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-SECOND CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1831—MARCH 3, 1833.

THE late Congress had been dispersed a month when Jackson put into execution his cherished plan of reorganizing the cabinet in his own personal interest.* There was now a lull in affairs favorable to such a project: the social season at Washington, with its bitter rivalries, had drawn to a close, and many months must needs elapse before ambitious Senators or an angry Vice-President could obstruct a new deal of the chief offices. True to his military instincts, however, the old general surprised his foe by moving suddenly from an unexpected quarter. For several weeks—in fact, ever since the Seminole pamphlet† came out—the political weather-wise had predicted that Calhoun's friends in the cabinet would be cast out; but no one foretold how skilfully the President would outflank their position. In truth, the reorganizing movement, to the surprise of every one, began with the other wing of the cabinet, and Jackson's friends set the example of self-denial. First, the jovial Eaton asked leave to withdraw,—that comrade and genuine good fellow whose fair Helen had stirred such strife of late in celestial circles as made the

1831.

April 7, 8.

* Vol. iii, pp. 494, 501.

† Vol. iii, p. 501.

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cabinet life to him intolerable.* Permission was granted, reluctantly, so it seemed, and as if to gratify the friend of simpler days. The astonishment grew when Van Buren followed, calm and mysterious to the last, bearing a carefully-glossed letter of resignation which deplored discord in the cabinet and softly hinted that candidates for the succession, of whom he was one, ought not to embarrass an administration by belonging to it; sentiments which Jackson emphasized in his reply, with a hearty acknowledgment of his premier's services, and the hope that this retirement was only temporary. With these two vacancies at his disposal, the President now turned upon Calhoun's disconcerted friends, Ingham and Branch, bidding them reflect upon the example; then, finding their minds obtuse, he explained, with courtesy, but decidedly, that his purpose was to construct a new cabinet from wholly fresh materials. To contest the point was useless, and they, too, resigned, but with ill-covered confusion. The Secretaries of War, State, the Treasury, and the Navy thus quickly dispersed in a fortnight. Berrien, the Attorney-General, and the third of the Calhoun faction, permitted himself to be squeezed out with more composure than had either of his two friends; for, being at the time absent in Georgia, he procured a respite, and then resigned on his return to Washington. By midsummer of 1831 the only member left of Jackson's original cabinet was the mild and inefficient Barry, whose mismanagement of the post-office had exposed him to charges which it was proper he should face and repel.†

April 11.

April 18–20.

June 5.

June 15.

This sudden dissolution of a President's chosen cabinet—for the Postmaster-General, we must remember, had just reached the dignity of Executive counsellor—sent through the country a thrill of surprise not unmingled with admiration. It seemed almost revolutionary. The king sought to make a new ministry when Parliament withdrew its

* Vol. iii, p. 491.

† 3 Parton's Jackson, 347–356; 40 Niles; 1 Benton, c. 54.

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confidence; but an American President, with his independent responsibility, had never done this before. John Adams, it is true, had set a partial example of this kind; but his action, all too tardy, was taken to clear himself of an unwilling inheritance from his predecessor, nor did his example go beyond the change of two secretaries. Both Washington and Madison remodelled their cabinets, as they were obliged to do in the course of an eight years' administration; but they did so gradually, and with all Jackson's other predecessors the ties of official intercourse had been almost as tender as a family relation. Traditions now suffered a rude shock, nor was this to be the last. The reasons, moreover, for the present dissolution were shrouded from the common sight. Van Buren's long and labored letter thickened instead of dispelling the mystery; public curiosity was on edge to know more of this; but only after a skirmish of many weeks between the *Telegraph* and the *Globe* did the hints and innuendoes thrown out by Calhoun's editor, which the President's organ challenged him to explain, expand into an open charge that the President had made discord among his cabinet officers by trying to control their private intercourse, and to force into society the soiled spouse of his Secretary of War. What share of truth there was in this accusation the reader has judged for himself;* but the unsavory tale was fortified by the open letters of Berrien, Branch, and Ingham, of whom the last-named had fled hastily from Washington to escape a drubbing at the hands of an infuriated husband.† By the time Eaton had given his version of the story, and Richard M. Johnson explained his own connection with the affair, by way of softening the imputations cast upon the President, this unhappy scandal subsided. Upon the whole subject of these cabinet infelicities Van Buren alone of the retiring officials preserved a baffling and discreet reserve, declining a public dinner which his Albany friends tendered in the hope of

September.

* Vol. iii, p. 491.

† Eaton's Exposition, Sept. 1831; 40, 41 Niles, *passim*.

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drawing him out. His silence increased the reputation of his masterly ability. "Well, indeed," was it said admiringly, "may Van Buren be called the great magician, for he raises his wand and the whole cabinet vanishes." *

The order of development in these cabinet changes favored the idea that Eaton and Van Buren having determined to resign, this determination convinced the President that an entire renewal of the cabinet would be necessary. Such was the surface impression conveyed by the official correspondence in the case; but Ingham, Branch, and Berrien showed their disbelief of this theory at once by their course of conduct; and it was soon officially revealed that the whole plan of dissolution was Jackson's from beginning to end.† By a clever ruse, which disarmed all argument, he pushed out his enemies, and transferred friends who were under fire to safer points, without affording the chance for an open break in his party. He meant to deal the Vice-President's faction a crushing blow, to place Van Buren where envious rivalry could not hurt him, and, most of all, to strengthen himself with the public for a second Presidential term, such as he now hoped for, by a new and influential cabinet devoted to his support and the public interests, while holding in his own control, for later decision, the choice of his far-distant successor. His choice of new advisers consisted with this purpose, and was well calculated to make a more popular administration. Edward Livingston, of Louisiana, now in the height of his second and secure renown, dignified and sedate, yielded his ease in the Senate to become Secretary of State.‡ gently transferring the home of his old age to his native State; Louis McLane, of Delaware, that veteran Federalist who knew the winning side, returned from his mission to London to take the portfolio of the Treasury which Ingham vacated; Lewis Cass, Governor of Michigan Territory for some

* N. Y. Courier; 40 Niles's Register, 145, 337.

† See Eaton's Exposition, Sept. 1831.

‡ Hunt's Livingston, 358, shows that the office was pressed upon him, and that he reluctantly accepted.

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eighteen years, and a pioneer colonel at the date of Hull's surrender, succeeded Eaton as Secretary of War; Levi Woodbury, of New Hampshire, lately a Senator,* took Branch's place as Secretary of the Navy; and to Berrien succeeded, as Attorney-General, Roger B. Taney, of Maryland, in some respects the ablest of these counsellors, and the only one as yet appointed to Jackson's cabinet who had not been identified in some way with the public service already.† Among such advisers, of whom the strongest were too old and the youngest not strong enough to contend for the succession, and none of them the blind partisans of existing rivals, Jackson might well hope to put that issue to sleep, and hold each to his routine work. It was an abler and better cabinet than the former one; but whoever might surround him, the chieftain sat at the head of his own table, and the advice which weighed most with him was not gathered at the council-board. 1831.

To Ingham, Branch, and Berrien the President imputed no fault when retiring them. Each received a polite testimonial of good service, but so perfunctory that they read nearly alike. None of them ever again received an invi-

* Woodbury, in the Senate, had just been succeeded by Jackson's favorite, Isaac Hill, and quite likely upon the understanding that he should have a place in the reconstructed cabinet. Vol. iii, p. 477.

† Taney had been Attorney-General of Maryland in 1827, but his reputation was mainly professional at this time. See Tyler's Life of Taney. John Quincy Adams mentions a story that Colonel Drayton, of South Carolina (the same person whom Jackson had commended to Monroe for the cabinet in the celebrated correspondence of 1816, published in 1824 in 26 Niles's Register, 160–166, vol. iii, 4), had the War portfolio offered him at this time, and declined it. 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary (August, 1834). Drayton was at the head of the Union party in that State, and opposed in politics to Calhoun. It appears that Jackson's plans further miscarried in respect to his former intimate, Judge Hugh L. White, now a Senator from Tennessee, for whom he had intended Eaton's place. White refused to accept; piqued, most probably, at the present drift of the succession in Van Buren's favor, and fancying himself slighted. We shall presently find him in a state of factious opposition to the ruling influence of the Democracy. See 8 Parton's Jackson.

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tation to office from him. Ingham at once disappeared; Branch and Berrien entered Congress again under different party auspices. For his other counsellors, however, the President had new appointments in reserve. Eaton, after tedious waiting, was sent to govern Florida, and thence transferred to the more congenial mission of Spain.* For Van Buren, McLane's late post stood ready, the very one for working out the President's new purpose and his own. Before summer was over the late premier was crossing the ocean in a packet-ship as minister to the Court of London, leaving the scene of turmoil behind him, and the President's cabinet was fully reconstructed.†

August.

Calhoun's downfall from Presidential favor was pregnant with woe to the Union. Through the adroit expedient which displaced his friends, he saw the clenched hand which was silently raised to destroy him.‡ These four years of alternate hope and despair were the delirium of his life; and the fever of ambition now coursing wildly in his veins left him, when the Presidential prize was borne beyond his reach, and his disappointment complete, a lonely and mischievous man, bloodless as a spider. Here lies the key which unlocks Calhoun's later career, and reconciles the whole inconsistent record of his public life; once a national man of nationals, but henceforth all for his State, for the Southern cause, reckless of the Union and the national welfare.

1831.

But for the present hope was uppermost. Jackson might yet be put down, and the country's dangerous crisis averted. Both Calhoun and Crawford had turned nervously to their late cabinet associates and to ex-President Monroe for further testimony on the Seminole war; each expecting the

* In later times, and after his return, General Eaton became estranged from Jackson and the Democracy. His famous wife survived him by more than twenty years, dying in Washington about 1878. 3 Parton's Jackson.

† Parton's Jackson, 344, etc.; 1 Benton, c. 54; Statesman's Manual.

‡ See Pendleton Messenger, Oct. 1831.

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other to bring out presently a new pamphlet on the subject. In this controversy the President took no open part, but his political staff were working up an exposition of his military conduct in 1818–19, and a strange fabrication was secretly concocted, with some connivance, we must suspect, on Jackson's own part. John Rhea, now superannuated, wrote to trap ex-President Monroe into a correspondence, which would import that by some means the latter had connived at a treacherous seizure of the Floridas, and had sent through Rhea himself the hint that Jackson desired.* This idea was utterly preposterous, and the whole correspondence of 1818 belied it.† When this strange missive arrived, Monroe lay in New York city at the point of death. Bereavement, sickness, and a pecuniary distress which Congress had partly relieved had sent him from his native State, a widower, to dwell with his surviving child, whose husband, Gouverneur, held the office of postmaster. On the 19th of June, sensitive to the honor of his acts in history, he deposed on oath in presence of witnesses that the statements of Rhea's letter to him, then read for the first time, were utterly false. To this document, the last of State papers, so to speak, which Monroe ever subscribed, his familiar name was firmly and legibly signed; and what thoughts must have passed through his mind as to the vanity of fame and human friendship while his pen glided over the paper? For he had been Jackson's generous benefactor. On the ensuing 4th of July, an anniversary whose memory had been hallowed by the exit of patriot souls with whom he was not unworthy to rank, Monroe died; and with the death of this pure and noble Virginian, the Seminole strife suddenly settled like a filthy pool, to be stirred up no more.‡

June 19.

July 4.

* Vol. iii, p. 68.

† See 12 Magazine American History, 308, where the whole evidence, with Rhea's lying letter, is examined at length in connection with the Monroe MSS.; Calhoun's Seminole Correspondence.

‡ See Monroe MSS. Whether the affair was thus dropped because the triangular quarrel between Jackson, Calhoun, and Crawford had produced a permanent rupture, or because the public would hear no

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Fortunately for Jackson's good name, and fortunately, too, for his more generous ambition, a greater issue was now presented upon which to conquer a second term. Well as Calhoun might have deserved on that threadbare record of 1818 which had given the President an excuse for renouncing him, he was strangely vulnerable of late years on the more vital point of loyalty to the essential principle of American Union. Singular was it that a statesman of Calhoun's capacity could have supposed for a moment that States-right theories more unpopular than those of the Hartford Convention could be planked into a Presidential platform; but he was a man of theories, who held young men by his glittering eye, and in the present chase, at least, he was easily infatuated. Ignorant as a child of northern sentiment and stability, and of spirit too lofty to win support by the little arts which were now coming into fashion, he seems nevertheless to have dreamed that he could in 1832 consolidate the South against the centralizing influences of the last eight years, bring over Pennsylvania and the West, and thus win the election.* Under him a last

more of it, or for more secret reasons, cannot be stated with confidence. Possibly the administration had learned from some source that Monroe made a statement *in extremis*, and dreaded to have it produced. Intimate friends of the ex-President, and John Quincy Adams among them, knew that such a statement existed. "There is," writes Adams of the Rhea letter, "a depth of depravity in this transaction at which the heart sickens." Diary, August 30, 1831. Rhea, who died in 1832, kept unbroken silence on the subject for the rest of his life; nor did Jackson or his friends ever bring the subject into controversy. What most nearly connects Jackson with this strange political conspiracy is the lengthy exposition of his conduct in the Seminole war which was found among his private papers after death, transcribed by another hand, loosely put together, but bearing his own signature at the end. Apparently it was prepared for publication, but suppressed, or at least withheld. Benton quotes it at great length, and Parton copies the calumny from Benton . . . 1 Benton's View, 168; 2 Parton's Jackson, 433. Calumny this writer calls it, for circumstantial proof alone is enough to dispel the idea that Monroe countenanced Jackson's designs against Spain. See 12 Magazine American History, 308–320, at length.

* McLean's letter, 1831. Monroe MSS.

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rally would be made for pure government against a vulgar despotism. But northern men of cooler judgment who were lately his intimates foresaw his failure, and felt that his star had sunk forever.* 1831.

In South Carolina, however, and among friends of the slaveholding aristocracy who gathered to greet Calhoun on his return from Congress, these States-rights heresies were very popular. Here at a public banquet given by his neighbors before the old cabinet was displaced, "lynx-eyed jealousy" was invoked to watch for the slightest attempt at infractions of the constitution, and Calhoun was brought to his feet by a toast loudly applauded, which against "the secret intrigues of cunning aspirants" pledged to candor, honesty, and talent "the station to which they are entitled in the confidence of the great body of the people."† To this the Vice-President responded modestly, being guarded as yet in his utterances. At a "States-rights ball" given at Charleston in March to Governor Hamilton, Calhoun's portrait adorned the wall with that of his preceptor, John Randolph‡, who was now playing in foreign courts the last pranks of his eccentric life.§ McDuffie presently, in a speech to his constituents, declared himself a nullifier, deriding the thought that this meant civil war. Warnings were thrown out in the press of the Palmetto State that Jackson's influence was steadily waning, and that should Clay succeed him in the Presidency the South would be driven in self-defence to nullification or secession.‖ All this paved the way for a deliberate announcement by the arch-nullifier himself, which Calhoun made when he saw clearly that it must be a death-grapple between Jackson and himself. In a broadside letter, lengthy enough for a Presidential message, the whole philosophy of nullification was set forth in a calm and demonstrative style, as the commander of a fort might show off to holiday visitors the dumb mouths of his bat- April. July 26.

* Ib. † 40 Niles, 171; local newspapers.
‡ Charleston Mercury, March, 1831; 40 Niles, 49.
§ Vol. iii., p. 461. ‖ 40 Niles, *passim*.

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tery.* Rules of action were deduced from the tariff, but neither this nor any other subject of national bodies was treated as a southern grievance.

Falsely reciting that from the beginning a divided sentiment had existed in the States on this subject, and that the great struggle of 1801 turned essentially upon such an issue, the writer planted himself upon the literal and misleading expression of the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions. "This right of interposition, thus solemnly asserted," he continued, "be it called what it may, State-right, veto, nullification, or any other name, I conceive to be the fundamental principle of our system, resting on facts historically as certain as our revolution itself, and deductions as simple and demonstrable as that of any political or moral truth whatever; and I firmly believe that on its recognition depends the stability and safety of our political institutions." This, he argued, was not anarchical and revolutionary; yet he glanced at "dangerous infractions on the part of Congress," in the tariff and other instances, and stated as a maxim that "where the majority rules, the minority is the subject." Passing from the disease to the remedy, he concludes that the question how the States are to exercise this high power of interposition, which constitutes so essential a portion of their reserved rights that its delegation must have involved an entire surrender of their sovereignty so as to convert our system from a federal into a consolidated government, is a question that the States only are competent to determine; that there must be a spirit of forbearance, no resort to remedy except in cases of dangerous infractions, and then only as the last resort, and as an intermediate point between two alternatives.†

Such was the carefully-drawn rationale on which Calhoun now placed himself; and his friends in New York, at a respectable meeting, put him in nomination

August 9.

* See the Pendleton, S. C., Messenger, in which this exposition first appeared. As copied into 40 Niles's Register, 437, it occupies eight double-column pages of fine print.

† As to the rise and growth of this nullification doctrine, see vol. i, p. 424; vol. ii, pp. 482–491.

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for President soon after, as though under his lead to recall the country to first principles. But the deep and insidious danger of South Carolina's attitude and Calhoun's was obvious; there were threatened contingencies in advance of a grievance, an indisposition to accept what the people might conscientiously declare at the polls. That same attitude was taken in 1860, and it was the attitude of aggressive rebellion. The two great champions of the Union had not been silent. An anti-nullification banquet in New York city, at which Chancellor Kent presided, drew out Webster's eloquence on the impassioned theme of his life. Jackson, with impressive pen, wrote a letter which declined an invitation to visit Charleston; and in doing so he warmly adjured its inhabitants to inculcate a reliance on the national justice, at the same time warning them that he should place the whole might of his office against any plan of disorganization, by whatever name it might be called.* These were glorious days for the constitution's allied defenders: the one matchless in debate, the other terrible in action and clad in popular confidence like a coat of mail.

March.

June.

On the 5th of December the twenty-second Congress assembled for a session unexpectedly long and violent. Setting out serenely enough, with little to engage general notice, it was soon launched into the personal rivalries of a Presidential campaign which forged great thunderbolts to be hurled forward. Both for its members and the accomplished work of two sessions, this Congress will ever shine bright in the galaxy of history. Statesmen the most illustrious and promising of the age served in one branch or the other, so that able colleagues transferred to the cabinet were hardly missed. In the Senate presided Calhoun, pallid and fascinating, and spun the web of his thoughts as he sat in solitary state; the beetle-browed Webster sat below; Clay, too, who reappeared at Washington after a long absence to guide the

1831. Dec. 5.

* 40 Niles, 351, etc.

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course of his party from the capitol wing less familiar to him. This was the triumvirate of splendid rivals opposed to the Jackson democracy, whose alliance, disalliance, and bitter disappointments make the epic of a quarter-century. Here, too, were William L. Marcy and his successor, Silas Wright, of New York, sturdiest of democrats; George M. Dallas, of Pennsylvania; John M. Clayton, of Delaware; Tazewell and the florid John Tyler, of Virginia; Hayne, of South Carolina; Forsyth, of Georgia; William R. King, of Alabama; George Poindexter, of Mississippi; Hugh L. White, of Tennessee; solid Thomas Ewing, of the opposition, newly chosen from Ohio; sturdy old Samuel Smith, who was chosen president *pro tem.;* and Benton, with his western breeziness, the lion who guarded the administration.

In the House of Representatives, first and foremost, until death struck him down at his desk, was the ex-President, John Quincy Adams, of the Massachusetts delegation, whose striking example first taught the world that the most exalted station of life may serve the entrance to a subordinate career still greater. Others distinguished in this branch were Rufus Choate, Edward Everett, and John Davis, of Massachusetts; Tristam Burges, of Rhode Island; Churchill C. Cambreling and Julian C. Verplanck, of New York; William S. Archer, John Y. Mason, and Andrew Stevenson, of Virginia; George McDuffie, of South Carolina; James M. Wayne, of Georgia; John Adair and Richard M. Johnson (late a Senator), of Kentucky; John Bell and James K. Polk, of Tennessee; and the western orator, Thomas Corwin, of Ohio, whose entrance upon the national scene begins with this Congress. Andrew Stevenson was re-elected Speaker of the House; but such was the strength of the opposition in this branch, though disunited, that his choice was by a precise majority.*

This was the last Congress whose representatives were

* Debates of Congress; 41 Niles. Stevenson received 98 votes, against 97 cast for all other persons.

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apportioned by the census of 1820, and one of the urgent subjects for legislation at this session was to establish a new rule of apportionment. By the new census of 1830 the Southern and Eastern States lost a portion of their relative weight, while the West gained in preponderance. One representative for every 47,700 inhabitants was the ratio finally agreed upon.*

When this distinguished body first came together there was no concert among those opposed to the administration, and such a concert it seemed most difficult to secure. All the opposition, whether of one House or the other, turned to Clay instinctively for direction, Webster waiving all claims of seniority, and deferring to his magnetic associate in the emergency. With masterly confidence did our Western Harry take command, scarcely waiting to shake off the dust of his arrival; and the paralysis of old disaster once dispelled, the anti-administrationists assumed the offensive. It was a close vote that gave Clay his credentials from the Kentucky legislature over Richard M. Johnson. To make issues for the coming campaign and win upon them was the chief intent of this session. Caucuses were held at the capitol to deliberate leading measures and to determine how the administration should best be opposed. Clay guided this work, and handled the stubborn elements so skilfully, though imperiously, that the Christmas holidays found opinions working into a promising shape.† 1831–32.

The administration crouched in the jungle, proposing no definite plan, but waiting rather to see what proposal its opponents would make. The President's message was a sedate, dignified, and temperate document, showing the influence of steadier counsels than before, but betraying not the slightest hint that a desperate conflict was coming. Foreign affairs were brought to the front, matters domestic remitted to the background, while grateful reflections, such

* Act May 22, 1832.

† Clay Priv. Corr., 1831; 8 John Quincy Adams's Memoirs.

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as none could object to, were made upon our plentiful crops, growing manufactures, and that steady development of national wealth which assured a near extinction of the public debt. But the very moderation of such a message led Jackson's enemies to believe that he dreaded a fight which must have exposed the dissensions among his own followers. Under the defiant lead of Clay, who organized Congress against the Executive, the administration was put quickly and constantly on the defensive, and from December up to the last hour of midsummer adjournment the political fight at the capital waxed hotter and hotter. Benton, who bore no mean part in the encounter, declares this session the most fiery and eventful one he had ever seen, or ever saw at all, except the panic session of the Congress which succeeded it.*

To dwell briefly upon the chief topics of legislation thus brought into controversy: First and foremost was that of renewing the charter of the United States Bank. Twice, as we have seen, President Jackson went out of his way in the twenty-first Congress to denounce that institution, and express himself hostile to its recharter.† Confident friends of the Bank, however, thought such language an empty threat; and since these utterances, at all events, the cabinet had been remodelled. In place of the wily Ingham, with his personal grievance, McLane, a conservative financier, now ruled the Treasury; and indeed his official report produced a sensation by its allusion to the existing corporation as an indispensable necessity, the offspring of necessity.‡ As for the President's message, it seemed to suggest a truce for the present, and until he could ascertain the final wishes of the people.§ But to let

* 1 Benton's View.

† Vol. iii, p. 474.

‡ The Globe, as the President's organ, assumed to "excuse" these expressions in the Treasury Report, and broadly hinted that the Secretary had gone beyond the proper range of his department. 41 Niles; Globe, Dec. 1831.

§ See third annual message; 2 Statesman's Manual.

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Jackson tide thus smoothly over the elections, if this were his meaning, the opposition did not incline. They believed thoroughly in the National Bank; they wished it rechartered, and wished to attach to their party the friends of a recharter by pushing the bill through Congress without delay. Now was the Republican opportunity; for if the President vetoed such a bill he would divide his own party on the election canvass, while his approval of it, after his former fulminations, would convict him of weakness. For whatever it was worth as a popular issue, recharter was their own: if it carried they could claim the glory; if it failed their appeal could be taken seasonably to the polls. True, this was forcing a needless issue, since the Bank's present charter would last five years longer; but supposing the issue a good one, why not press it when the President was in an obvious dilemma, with his own cabinet divided on the question, and when a numerical majority of Congress, regardless of party ties, could be procured in both Houses in favor of the measure?

Such were the inducements privately urged by Clay, whose word at this moment was law with his party. Clay played always a bold hand. To drive an adversary against the horns of a dilemma was his favorite stratagem; and here he felt quite sure that Jackson was lying low to avoid responsibility; fearful, on the one hand, of losing Pennsylvania, his favorite State, should he veto the bill, and, on the other, of miscarrying South and West if he approved it.* Early in December Clay had been nominated President by the National Republicans; and the address of their convention pledged the party and its candidate openly to the cause of the United States Bank against a President who had thrice volunteered sentiments hostile to its recharter.† The day is now past for a Presidential candidate to be taken out of that retirement which is so favorable to success, and placed in the reeking cockpit of debate, there to spur

1831.

* Clay, Priv. Corr., 1831-32.

† 4 Niles, 301; 1 Benton's View, 232.

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and show his mettle, and peril his whole party; but candidates were still chosen from the greatest, without a close study of popular foibles. The aspiring Kentuckian plumed himself for a fight which would show that a hero of debate might overmatch a hero of the battle-field. This anxiety to be first by valorous combat was indeed Clay's noble infirmity. The knightly hall had three inscriptions: "Be bold! be bold! evermore be bold!" But there was a fourth, "Be not too bold!" and that inscription he did not read.

Whether to force the fight at so critical a time was earnestly discussed in caucus. The Bank had its own friends in Jackson's party, who differed among themselves; and to resolve the doubt President Biddle sent a confidential envoy to the capital from Philadelphia.* The two wings, of different politics, at first disagreed; but Clay's powerful will bore down all doubters of his own party, after which the friends of the Bank agreed to proceed in concert. Receiving this report, the president and directors of the Bank prepared their memorial,

1832. January 9. praying Congress for a recharter. On the 9th of January the memorial was presented in each branch, by Dallas in the Senate and McDuffie in the House, both members of the administration party. Much was made in these days of the member who presented a petition. But while McDuffie was one of the Calhoun stripe, ready to march off, Dallas, being selected as a democrat, a Philadelphian, and the son of the Secretary to whom the present Bank owed its existence, showed the trepidation of an untried leader who wished to serve two masters. He was favorable, he said, to the object sought by this petition, and yet regretful to have it before Congress at the present time.† In truth, both Clay and Biddle meant defiance to Jackson, and they wished to use the democratic contingent accordingly.

* 8 J. Q. Adams's Memoirs, 482; 1 Benton, 227.

† Annals of Congress; 1 Benton, 233. It appears that the Bank would have preferred Webster to Dallas. Sumner's Jackson, 259, citing Sargent.

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This Bank memorial, expressed decently and moderately, was referred in the Senate to a select committee,* which reported March 13 in favor of renewing the charter, with some changes, for fifteen years after the present one should expire. The bill which accompanied this report was ordered to a second reading and then laid upon the table pending an investigation which the House had ordered meantime into the affairs of the Bank. March 13.

It was in the House that the first brunt of the encounter was borne. Here McDuffie had succeeded, after a slight skirmish, in procuring a reference of the memorial to the committee of ways and means, of which he was chairman; thus preventing the Speaker from selecting a committee more likely to defer to the President's wishes. The report of this committee favored the Bank, as expected, and in fact proposed a renewal of its charter for twenty years. And now came the hostile collision in earnest. Friends of the Executive in both Houses, Benton and Wayne among them, had tried their best to ward off a bank war until the Presidential election was over; nor in truth was the President himself free from such misgivings. But the challenge flung out, Jackson could give it but one answer; and now his champions essayed to conquer on the very lines his foemen had selected. They fought relentlessly, even brutally; and not content with offering broad objections to a new charter, of which there were many, they struck random and unscrupulous blows at the credit of the existing institution, as though to shatter its fortunes and all the mercantile and private interests which had become interwoven with its prosperity. 1832. January 9. Feb. 10.

This mob warfare upon the United States Bank was not extemporized in Congress; for many of the party organs had already taken up that cry against mammon and monopoly which the President first instigated and poor men are ready to raise. No specific abuses were 1832.

* Dallas, Webster, Ewing, Hayne, and Johnston (of Louisiana) were chosen this committee.

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pointed out, no specific substitute was planned; and yet the simpler part of the community could not but feel a lurking dislike of that financial Briareus which made partnership of the government and favored capitalists for ruling the monetary world. The State banks, too, cropped of influence and kept in subjection to the despot of many vaults, fostered this general distrust by inflaming local pride. A bloated centralism seemed typified indeed in a monster corporation, whose belly rested in Philadelphia, whose claws reached out in every direction, and whose brain was President Biddle. It was strange if this man, dubbed the Emperor Nicholas, should not wear something of the imperial bearing, for railway kings in these times there were none. This very element of encroaching power and influence must have carried a fatal germ of weakness with it under a government of popular rights; for what moneyed institution, or what business involving capital, is safe which draws the fire of the voting public upon that most sensitive and vital part, its credit?

In September, 1831, a triennial meeting of the stockholders of the United States Bank took place in Philadelphia. Stephen Girard presided, and a report was made by a committee of seven, with Horace Binney at the head, which verified the official statements of the directors. It was shown that the capital stock consisted of 350,000 shares (at a par value of $100 each), of which the United States held 70,000, by this time fully paid for, while more than 79,000 shares were distributed abroad; and that of the domestic stock the chief holders, according to the books, resided in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Maryland; these States, in their order, followed by New York and Massachusetts, which might be said to represent about 33,000 shares each; while scarcely a share was owned west of the Appalachian slope. About a quarter part of this domestic stock was held in small amounts and more than that fractional part by women, trust officers, and religious and charitable societies. The branch offices of the Bank throughout the Union were 25 in number, 18 of them having been established in 1817, when

1831. Sept. 1.

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its business began, and applications being now on file for more than 30 new ones. The total liabilities of the institution aggregated $118,993,000; its circulation nearly $23,000,000; its deposits $16,368,000, of which $7,252,000 were due to the government; its loans on personal security $41,585,000. The directors claimed that the Bank had remedied former disorders which arose from depreciated paper, supplied the people with a sound and stable currency, and brought internal exchange down to a very moderate figure. Owing to early misfortunes, its profits from 1817 to 1831 had averaged but little over 5 per cent. a year; but for the last three years and a half it had paid dividends at 7½ per cent. Of the general government this institution had been the faithful ally; it had aided the treasury in collecting and distributing the revenue, had kept domestic exchanges at a fair equilibrium, arrested the violence of foreign fluctuations, and restored specie payments to the community. In a word, the welfare of the United States Bank, as its managers asserted, was now fully identified with that of the American people. This report the stockholders accepted, and, with a vote of confidence, authorized President Biddle and the board of directors to apply to Congress at discretion for a recharter, and to accept the terms of renewal at any time before the next triennial meeting.*

Nicholas Biddle embarked with the confidence of a money magnate upon the perilous tide of popular legislation. The first charge such magnates are sure to encounter, be it rightly or wrongly made, is that of exerting a corrupt and sinister influence over the the legislators. Already had the *Washington Globe* and *New Hampshire Patriot* spread foul reports of bribery in connection with procuring the resolution favorable to recharter which passed the Pennsylvania legislature, with other and lesser accusations, all of which the managers indignantly repelled. Equally reckless was the course now pursued by Biddle's opponents on the floor of the House to make party capital. 1831.

* See report, etc., 41 Niles, 30, 112.

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Benton, who led the administration forces from the Senate, naively admits that such tactics were pursued under his own inspiration; that the plan was to assail recharter at all points, and incessantly force the Bank into defences which would lay it open to side blows as well as direct attacks, and rouse the people to a state of readiness for the veto which was forthcoming.* Hence he proposed inquiries, some proper, some plausible, as a basis for investigation by the popular branch; and calling Clayton, of Georgia, aside, a new member of the House and an anti-bank Democrat, he placed in his hands a memorandum, in which were specified all the flying rumors against the interest of the United States Bank under twenty-two heads of accusation.†

1832.

Clayton rose in his place accordingly, and moved a select committee of the House for this drag-net investigation; prompting his memory from Benton's own memorandum (so Benton states), which he would curl over his finger to conceal the handwriting. Resistance being in vain, the resolution was carried. The committee was agreed to, and consisted of Clayton himself, Richard M. Johnson, Francis Thomas, of Maryland, and Cambreling, of New York, all opposed to a recharter, and McDuffie, John Quincy Adams, and Watmough, of Pennsylvania, who were in favor of it. The inquiry was conducted at Philadelphia. Three reports followed their investigation: one by the majority, which censured the Bank on many points, and took ground against recharter at this time; one by McDuffie and Watmough in favor of rechartering at once; and a third by John Quincy Adams, which made a painstaking defence of the Bank against all the charges. Adams, a personal friend of Biddle, had just sold out the shares he owned so as to divest his vote of pecuniary interest;‡ and his industry in the research stood in contrast with Johnson's easy in-

1832. Feb. 23.

April 30.

* 1 Benton's View, 235.

† Benton's View, 238. There were seven important and fifteen minor ones.

‡ 8 J. Q. Adams's Memoirs, 425. Adams's report is remarkable in

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dolence, who helped out the majority report by his signature, as he frankly told the House, without looking into a document or asking a question. Johnson, who was afterwards Vice-President, aspired to supreme honors, as others since have done, on the strength of his obliging nature.

The Senate came to the rescue with its own bill for renewing the charter, which was taken up and passed in June after much discussion, by a vote of 28 to 20. When this bill reached the House, the anti-bank men made every effort to postpone its consideration; but it was made the special order for June 18. The tariff bill (of which we shall presently speak) blocked the way until June 30; but finally the friends of the Bank, outnumbering its foes all the time, rode down all opposition, and on a division of 107 to 85 the bill passed, on the eve of our national holiday. An amendment proposed by McDuffie having been concurred in by the Senate, the measure now went to the President to meet its fate, which for six days was anxiously awaited.* June 11. June 18–30. July 3. July 4.

Beneath the surface of those facts which members of the House investigating committee had expounded so variously, not one of their reports being dispassionate, one is curious to discern the true condition of that great corporation when it grappled with Jackson for existence. No new light is afforded, save that shed by the sequel to the long struggle which for ten years to come was destined to occupy the foreground of our politics; and to judge by that sequel the Bank's own exposure of corruption and mismanagement was worse than that laid open by its bitterest foes. Much of the iniquity, however, may be imputed to the straits into which the Bank had fallen, after slander had driven it forth to sin like a woman accused of unchastity. To every such institution honor is scarcely more vital than the repute of honor; and when did fiscal com-

bringing to light for the first time that singular collision between Biddle and the administration in 1829 which may have stirred the President to make war on the Bank. See vol. iii, p. 471.

* Congressional Debates; 2 Statesman's Manual.

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pany ever encounter such brutal and repeated blows as this one? Dearly did the American people pay for the ignorant energy of this blind warfare, though the lesson of experience was a useful one. Yet, while the institution was doubtless sound for weathering the usual storms, it was, perhaps, tottering and required bracing; and abuses seem to have existed thus early which neither the respectable committee of stockholders could detect nor the piercing eye of Adams. Certainly, a vigilant inspection was wanting, and the stockholders were so scattered that a meeting once in three years scarcely brought a quorum together. The tendency was therefore to centralize power in the board of directors, and that of the ponderous board itself in a committee whose autocrat was President Biddle. Like every other bank, the present one operated secretly and with funds whose true value only experts could verify, while the common interest of all concerned was to maintain credit under all circumstances. Without plant, without a visible earning machinery, the managing board of such a concern may use its resources wisely or unwisely, honestly or viciously, but it learns above all things to be plausible,—to show the placid surface. Opportunity tempted Nicholas Biddle, and corrupted him by slow degrees, and this death-struggle with politicians was his ruin. No one ever entered a bank directory more honorably purposed to rescue its resources from knavish hands than did he in 1819;* no one ever rose with better boost of merit to the head of the board. But long direction of the pulse of business, long dealing with men of influence in legislation who needed his favor as he needed theirs, long independence of those vicissitudes which keep most men prudent, bloated him into a plutocrat, one of that dangerous sort in a republic, callous to opinion, who carry politics into commerce and commerce into politics. He grew purse-proud, unscrupulous, venturesome, his handsome features all the while hardening into a mask. He began by retaining statesmen as counsel, lending liberally to Congress-

* Vol. iii, p. 115.

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men, and advancing to editors on the pledge of newspaper presses; this led to subsidizing public improvements to make the Bank popular, and finally to wasting the whole precious treasure of depositors and stockholders in the delirious schemes of a greedy syndicate. But the king of finance now swayed the sceptre, and from his quarters at Washington directed the fight for a new charter, now urging Clay on, now trying, through Livingston, to pacify the President and come to terms.*

We may dismiss as frivolous or unsupported most of the accusations of this session. But family favoritism and the usurpation of functions by a sub-committee of the directors were charged at this time, and it is positive that these two practices went far to ruin the Bank five years later. A vicious but innocent custom founded in a false theory of banking promoted danger, besides: that, namely, of using branch drafts as currency, which the parent bank, at whose counter they were redeemable, could not practically check or control. Some lesser abuses were either glossed over in the testimony or met by the Bank's denial. In short, the Bank was vindicated in 1832 only by fully believing its officers; and Biddle, who wrote with too facile a quill, was a man of metaphorical facts and flowery statistics. His plans of royal beneficence, which he never tired of describing, did not forget the privy purse; and, while he possessed entire candor, he was at this very moment covering up serious difficulties against which the Bank was struggling painfully.† For 1832.

* See Hunt's Livingston, 353.

† In Sumner's Life of Jackson, p. 261, will be found an exhaustive review of the charges made in 1832. We may observe of them briefly: (1) That the Bank arranged to postpone the payment of government 3 per cents. which were due in October, 1831; plausible reasons being assigned for this step, while the real one was to gain relief against a stringency produced by the operation of the branch draft system, in consequence of which the western and non-paying branches absorbed so much capital as to cripple those at the east. (2) That this whole branch draft system was vicious and dangerous from a financial point of view, such paper issues, though nominally a medium convertible like currency, being bills of exchange rather, and liable to inflation

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all this the Bank was sound and needed only a corrective hand.

Tariff was a topic even more engrossing for the two years of this Congress than the Bank itself. Upon this question, likewise, Clay's plastic touch moulded the policy of the opposition. He found it the most difficult of all subjects for harmonizing opinions; for factions stood out, while the South Carolina ultras were completely wrong-headed and bent on their own destruction.* How-

1832. January 9. ever, on the very same day that the memorial from the United States Bank was presented Clay followed its reference in the Senate by submitting a resolution which proposed changes in the tariff in favor of a protective policy.†

while credit was active, and a source of embarrassment when unexpectedly offered for redemption. (3) That the Bank had already begun making little presents to road and canal enterprises, had entered several of the leading editors and publishers of the country on its list of borrowers, had incurred a large expense in circulating pamphlets and newspapers to influence public opinion on its behalf, and loaned very generously to members of Congress of both parties. Nothing like bribery or subsidy was shown, to be sure, and such borrowers claimed that their debts were amply secured; yet it was significant that one of these newspaper debtors, the New York Courier and Enquirer, changed front suddenly in favor of the new charter. (4) That gross favoritism was shown in making a cousin of President Biddle the broker of the Bank, and allowing him, besides, to take current funds for speculations of his own without paying interest. Biddle admitted a culpable usage in this respect, which he promised to rectify, but denied the charge in its darker shade; which was resolved, in fact, into an issue of veracity between himself and one Whitney who gained favor with Jackson by turning informer. Curiously enough, the management was shown guilty of these very acts in 1837–38. (5) That an exchange committee of the board of directors managed the business in secret conclave; another charge clearly established years later, but at this time controverted.

We need hardly add that each report from the House committee of 1832 pleased its own side; and that the investigation was too hasty and too passionate to be thorough.

* Clay Priv. Corr., Dec. 1831.

† Debates of Congress.

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This tariff subject, into which local and sectional interests are pieced like the coat of many colors, seemed destined now to recur with each Presidential contest, always to agitate but never to be settled. In spite of all that has been confidently said or written on this subject during a century of the American Union, it cannot be said that our people have advanced a single step beyond the experimental stage of national tariffs; and this, most of all, for the reason that opinion is swayed by business interest, while business interests interlace over the vast surface of our continent, not only changing, but coming into admitted rivalry. Men may not fathom the laws of trade, but they trade upon principles of which they are tenacious; and to those principles, and the individual gain which they perceive in consequence, whether by making or saving money, they are likely to adhere. Actual experiment, it is true, may change a conviction on such points, but theory never. Here, among a varied and vigorous race of toilers crowding upon one another, eager to amass, and living under a complex but elastic system of laws which they themselves may influence, it is certain that the most intricate problems of political economy will in time be worked out; not, however, upon the lines of European experience, nor without much waste and wandering. Agriculture, manufactures, and commerce are all of national concern, and each must be considered; none should be greedy to the detriment of the rest. 1832.

Upon this delicate question the Jackson administration hardly showed its hand. The tariff act of 1828, against which the Southern planters had inveighed so bitterly, was still unchanged.* Neither manufacturing nor agricultural States regarded it as a finality; and the increasing prosperity of American commerce, which bore with it an increased revenue, produced a state of things, now that the public debt was approaching extinction, where tariff modification of some sort would be not only judicious but

* Vol. iii, pp. 423, 442. We have seen that the experiment of modifying the tariff in 1830 miscarried in Congress. Ib. 486.

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indispensable. In which direction, then, should the tariff be modified? Each wing of the opposition had its motto to attract the people. Clay, with his long-avowed opinions, was a fit leader of the manufacturers, of the protectionists, of all who looked upon government as a nourishing mother. Calhoun woke the free traders of 1828, whose rebellious cry had been stifled since Jackson's election so long as the least chance remained of taking the sceptre into their lineal grasp. Popular conventions typifying these hostile ideas had assembled in the fall of 1831 to forestall political movements. Each brought its business men to the front, but was really engineered by public men; each issued a long address to the people by way of argument, and each adjourned in season to work upon public opinion before the assembling of Congress. At the free-trade convention which met in Philadelphia, Berrien, the late Attorney-General, was prominent, and in fact committed its majority, which was intensely Southern, to the maxim that "protection is unconstitutional," a ground too radical for the veteran Gallatin, who had come down, as it were, from another age to sit, a New York delegate, among these Arabs from Virginia and the Carolinas. Was it not a strange dogma to preach at this late day in Pennsylvania's busy mart? Scarcely had the free traders folded their tents and vanished, when Pennsylvania attended its own congenial gathering in New York city. Here Wilkins, of western Pennsylvania and the United States Senate, presided, and Charles J. Ingersoll, of Philadelphia, presented the address. This was the high-tariff convention, or, as the call styled it, of "the friends of domestic industry." Into this fellowship were sagaciously united as many national interests as possible. But of this convention the delegates came chiefly from New England and the Middle States; Ohio and western Virginia were barely represented, and the great South and West not at all.*

1831.

Sept. 30.

Oct. 26.

* 41 Niles; newspapers of the day.

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Producers who have in view the direct and definite interest of a moneyed pursuit can contrive better for carrying their ends than the great incoherent mass of consumers or customers. This truth economists have remarked, and history here verified it. We may trace in both gatherings an effort to influence Pennsylvania, whose ponderous weight in the Presidential scale no party could despise. A report of the committee on iron and steel* at this New York convention was widely circulated. Of this great Pennsylvania industry, whose influence in national politics was constantly gaining, a full and accurate account was eagerly sought at this time, and Secretary Woodbury prepared a report pursuant to a call of the late Congress. Cotton-growers saw with little serenity the growth of a new interest which would force the Keystone State in time to antagonize Southern policy and clasp firm hands with New England. "We'll break the iron arch of Pennsylvania," was the threat of a British orator on the free-traders' side, "and with it the whole system will fall to the ground." But protection brought other interests into combination: there was the sugar-planting interest of Louisiana, which wanted a high tariff against Cuba; that of the cotton and woollen mills eastward; hatters, shoe-dealers, cheap furniture makers, copper manufacturers, and a host of others. The interests of the farmer and laborer, so these claimed, were completely interwoven with their own; and those of commerce, too, for whose benefit protection in the shape of a discriminating tonnage had so constantly been laid. 1831.

As between these long-clashing principles, that of free trade may be pronounced the ideal one. It accords with nature; it respects the rights of man as a free dweller upon God's earth; it fulfils that primary condition of trade that commodity shall be exchanged at choice for commodity, without hindrance or a subsidy to any man. But the world's trade is regulated, not by theory, but by existing facts; and there is no such thing as free trade with other

* 41 Niles, appendix.

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nations unless other nations concede it. For the United States protection or favor to American industries meant at this time a final release from the bondage of the British colonial policy. Close protection, we have shown, had been the chosen—perhaps the compelled—policy of European countries ever since the downfall of Napoleon and the lull of that devastating tempest of which our own war of 1812 was a sort of side-wind. From this jealous self-regard of nations the only relief, and that a most imperfect one, lay in special stipulations under treaty, which granted favor for favor. The loss of the carrying trade, which neutrals drain from the belligerents, had driven New England enterprise into manufactures as a means of livelihood. American interests were manifold, now working in together, now in one another's way; there were all sorts of products, animal and vegetable, staples like cotton and tobacco, raw materials and manufactured goods, the fisheries, the mines. How simple and consistent in comparison might be the tariff policy of Great Britain, whose constant aim was to increase her commerce and sell her manufactured goods all over the globe, bringing home the essential food and raw materials which her own population could not possibly supply for themselves, and for all such supplies developing, as the secondary end, the markets of her own colonies. It was to further that plain and sagacious policy, not to abandon it, that her statesmen changed the system from protection to free trade. In 1825 Huskisson brought forward the first meagre reforms in taxation, which amounted simply to reducing the duties on raw wool, dyestuffs, and other needful materials of industry. American breadstuffs and food-products continued in 1831 and for many years after to be shut out from British ports; and only a famine and the failure of the Irish potato crop induced Peel's ministry in 1846 to carry the final repeal of the corn-laws. British free trade, in short, was the outgrowth, not of benevolence to the race, but of a shrewd and calculating economy. Every advance of ·rican industry in these days towards supplying the ·h colonial market was closely watched and thwarted.

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After Congress had framed the moderate protection act of 1824, English mill-owners sent their cloths into American ports in an unfinished state in order to get them below the minimum, and then had them finished here. They further checkmated our infant enterprise by invoicing cloths to their American agents below the market price.* Our tariff of 1828 followed, and from the moment of the agitation which produced that act American Presidents were weighed for many years at the court of London according as their influence could slide the scale up or down. English merchants and manufacturers struggled to hold this market, which for upwards of a century had been their own and their most profitable one; but to sell their goods abroad as much as possible, and to buy only what could not be produced at home, was still their object. From 1821 to 1831, according to Treasury statements, American exports to Great Britain fell short of the amount of imports by more than $46,000,000, a deficit which we had to neutralize by profitable commerce elsewhere.†

How complex our own situation, on the other hand, was shown by the scramble of incongruous interests which produced the medley legislation of 1828,— 1831–32.
that "tariff of abominations," as its enemies styled it. New England wanted high duties on woollen and cotton fabrics, and low duties on raw wool, iron, hemp, and molasses; Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky wanted high duties on wool, iron, hemp, and molasses, and low duties on woollen and cotton fabrics; the South, with staples sure of a market somewhere, wanted low taxes on everything.‡ And yet the constant and increasing prosperity of the Union since 1828 all parties and all sections admitted, save malcontents of South Carolina, whose real cause of depression was the slave system. From 1831–32.
gloom and darkness the country had advanced since 1824 to the open sunlight. The chief articles of consumption affected by the tariff of 1824 were now cheaper

* See Sumner's Jackson, which admits this.
† 42 Niles; Clay's Speeches. ‡ Sumner's Jackson.

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and better than they had been for years prior to that act. Iron, salt, brown sugar, cotton and woollen goods, could be purchased on better terms. Cotton cloth, which sold in 1817 at 29 cents, and in 1819 at 21 cents, by the yard, might now be bought for 9 or 11 cents; brown sugar, which averaged 14 cents a pound from 1792 to 1820, had ruled at 8 cents for these last ten years; window-glass had come down in price about two-thirds; flour, one-half; beef, pork, tobacco, most of the necessaries, if not the luxuries of life, in like proportion. New machinery, improved modes of conveyance, recuperation from war, and the gradual return of trade to specie standards might partly account for price variations, but the main fact remained indisputable that our people had advanced in prosperity instead of receding. Competition was alive, and America could now compete with the mother-country where once her infant energies were repressed. To take bar-iron, for instance, the annual product since 1828 had been in a ratio of nearly 25 per cent., while its wholesale price had diminished. Our coarse cotton goods, no longer confined to the home, had gained a sure footing in the South American and foreign markets against those of Great Britain; and what with superior water-power, the vicinity of raw materials, and female labor, our mills already turned out half the quantity of cotton cloth which British mills produced in 1816. In flannels and calicoes we nearly occupied the home market. Woollen manufactures had developed, and would have developed still better but for the high duty still imposed upon the raw material for the farmer's benefit. Prosperity at home widened the market for the produce of the farmer and planter, and added to their wealth. We had a wide market for the home interchange of products of all kinds which Great Britain had not. But if, abandoning all these advantages, this nation, capable from the energy and intelligence of its people and the extent and diversity of their pursuits and productions, were now to throw open its ports to the free admission of foreign productions, what foreign ports should we find open in return to the free admission of our own goods and surplus produce?

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Such were the facts and arguments, and strong ones, adduced at this date, in and out of Congress, by the friends of the "American system," so called,—a swelling phrase which denoted more properly such economic system for this Union as the times demanded. The great spokesman of this policy in the Senate debates of 1832 was Clay, and never was his surpassing oratory heard to better advantage. When he rose to speak every seat in the Senate-chamber was occupied within and without the bar, and the crowd of breathless auditors overflowed in the lobbies and gallery. The long-lost magic of his presence, now restored to the hive of national discussion, lent an insensible charm to his speech, which by turns was pathetic and passionate. He alluded to his old age; but all felt him to be in continuous prime. The administration he lashed with a freedom unusual for a rival candidate, yet it gained him applause. "I scorn its wrath," he said, "and I defy its power." But through the storm and sunshine of such utterances the argument flowed clear and cogent. His eloquence expanded a dull theme into colossal relief, and made plain figures glow like inner embers. Clay was well supported in debate by both senators of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Maine, Ewing, of Ohio, Clayton, of Delaware, and others. Friends of the administration, like Benton and Samuel Smith, pressed the issue scarcely beyond the point of defending the President against personal assaults, and urging good feeling and a fair reduction of the revenue, as his message had done. Neither Clay's party nor Clay himself denied that the tariff should now be modified in the direction of economy; a surplus taxation for the sake of protecting they never asked for; but their position was to make the needful reduction subservient to American industry as far as possible, so as to preserve the principle of protection unimpaired.* The real contention over this question was with that

1832. Jan.–Feb.

1832.

* Clay Priv. Corr., Oct. 1831; 1 Benton.

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other faction, equally opposed to Jackson and equally earnest, the nullifiers of South Carolina. Senators from Virginia and other neighboring States aided the plea of free trade, or rather of low-tariff principles, but the burden of debate was borne by Hayne, who in this last of his national encounters in debate proved as little of a match for Clay as he had been for Webster two years before. South Carolina's main fault at this time was her haughty and insolent bearing towards the rest of the Union, her spleen being chiefly vented upon the rapacity of New England and the "dollar-loving Yankee," though broad-brimmed Pennsylvania was always in truth the steadiest and the most ravenous protectionist of all these sister States. The Palmetto legislature had cocked the hat for defiance, announcing measures thus early to counteract the nation, but making a virtue of suspending their threat long enough for Congress to retrace its steps. Even the constitutional party in South Carolina, which rebuked such vehemence, sent on a prayer for relief from the present tariff; and the open menaces of his constituents at home Hayne himself could scarcely keep from repeating on the floor, hard though he strove to preserve the decorum of debate and carry his point by discretion.

Nor, to be patient with these rebellious mutterings, did the Southern free traders of 1832 rest the argument of their cause on clear and impregnable grounds. Instead of demonstration by cold figures and facts, they tried to strangle practical legislation on a practical subject by the hollow assumption that Congress had no right to choose its own revenue policy; that protection itself was unconstitutional. To this tune they wound the horn. What meant, then, the tariff preamble of 1789 and forty years of national experience which demonstrated the need of adapting our tariff system to existing conditions? The ablest statesmen who flattered this specious belief had hardly the brass to avow it as their own, and, if they did so, their record convicted them. Clay called attention in the course of debate to the equivocal expression of free-trade addresses on this point, one of which seemed to have

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been drawn by the Vice-President. Calhoun here interposing, said, with his usual grave and stoical air, that if the chair be alluded to, his opinion is that a protective tariff is unconstitutional. "When, in 1816, we worked together in Congress side by side," responded Clay, with equal gravity, "I did not understand the gentleman to contend that such a policy was unconstitutional." "The constitutional question," rejoined the Vice-President, "was not then debated, but I have never expressed an opinion contrary to the present." "No, sir," was Clay's instant response; "it was not debated at that time, for it was not then considered debatable." *

Another ingenious theory of the free traders to serve this turn was that the import duty was equivalent to an export duty, and fell upon the staple producer. There might, to be sure, be inconvenience in exchanging abroad our cotton, rice, and tobacco, the only sure American exports, for manufactured goods which must pay an impost duty. But did that burden fall upon the staple producer or exporter especially? Was it not borne rather by the home consumer, wherever he might be, by the common people of America, and, most of all, by economizers of the North and West, who made no complaint so long as the home market might be enlarged in consequence for their own productions? Of the staple-raisers who made up this coterie of ultra free traders, a class of men whose resources flowed in and out like the running brook, few spent half their incomes in the necessary support of their households.

The truth is, that of the Southern grievance now dwelt upon, much was imaginary and much due to causes underlying the tariff. The general prosperity of the Union in 1832 was unmistakable; the admissions of the most ultra staple-raisers through the next five years showed that they shared in it; and had not Calhoun's Presidential ambition been trodden under heel so rudely by the hero he waited on, South Carolina would not have lifted the nulli-

* 42 Niles's Reg., 5; Cong. Debates.

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fying banner on the tariff question, but taken her chances of legislation. Of all the States, this one anchored fast to the rule of a native aristocracy, and shut the door upon mankind. The disdainful Carolinian mused till the fire burned; in bitter jealousy he contrasted the advance of northern enterprise with southern stagnation, the northward flight of these white birds of commerce which once had flocked to Charleston's rotting piers, and, separating cause and consequence, he thought that Union was the ruin of his State, and cursed the unequal tariff.

If protection was robbery to the cotton planter, what was the bondsman's labor on his crop which he counted as part of his own legitimate profit? If an indirect tribute, in common with his fellow-citizens, seemed an exaction when coarse fabrics and implements were to be bought, did not the constitution directly exempt him from all export tribute upon his produce, an exemption made for the express advantage of southern staple-raisers? If the act of 1828 was a "tariff of abominations," had not these free traders worked into it as many objectionable features as possible, purposely intending to make it as odious as possible? And even to admit that a protective policy worked injuriously to their interests, what should be the course of a small minority, when opposed to the prevalent wishes, but to gain whatever concessions they might, submit with patience, and trust to the future? Democrats like Dallas and Benton gave the right reason why South Carolina had not kept pace with the century: it was because of the character of southern labor in itself and its influence upon others.*

The argument for free trade is stronger in our day than it was in 1832, and it gathers strength as nations approach the point of reciprocal benefit in their commercial dealings. But to take South Carolina's attitude at this time on the tariff, we are forced to believe that the free-trade leaders aggravated the existing ills for political effect, and because

* See Dallas's explanation in debate, delicately stated and seconded, in Benton's View, 271.

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they were eager to try the effect of their new nostrum. We believe, too, that in view of the general industrial condition in 1832 throughout the Union, and the current opinion of economists, it was monstrous for South Carolina to demand free trade under the threat of nullification. There was not even a new grievance, nor the refusal to lessen a former one: it was rebellion upon a logical proposition. Clay's own resolution, on which the issue was taken, conceded that the revenue must now be reduced, and the burdens of taxation adjusted more equally than before, but proposed that the main principle of protection be left unimpaired. The nullifiers, on the other hand, demanded that protection should be disowned and free trade announced instead; and it was the wound on the hip of their theory which smarted. Their honor was affronted. The details of enactment were arranged in the House, not the Senate, and under the lead of John Quincy Adams, who was placed by a Democratic speaker, with his reluctant consent, at the head of the committee on manufactures because his views on the tariff were moderate.* The report of his committee was delayed long enough for the Senate debates to elicit the sense of the country. Earlier in the session, however, McDuffie took the floor of the House on behalf of the cotton planters with an ultra free-trade bill which proposed scaling down the present duties to a 25 and even 12½ per cent. basis. His line of argument was like that proposed by Hayne and others from his State. "I do confidently believe," was his emphatic warning, "that if South Carolina fails in the struggle she is now waging, the brief days of American liberty will be numbered." Secretary McLane of the Treasury also submitted to the House, upon request, the draft of a bill for a somewhat sweeping reduction, with a report which gave his own views on the tariff.† February 8. April 27.

* See J. Q. Adams's Diary, 445, 482, 500. Adams's prepossessions regarding the tariff favored rather the views of the President than of Clay.

† 42 Niles, 188, 202; House Docs.

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All sides of the vexed question having been considered, Adams reported a new tariff bill from his committee on
May 23. the 23d of May. McDuffie had already drawn a discussion of his own proposal; but on the first of June a test vote showed the free traders outnumbered in
June. the House by nearly two to one. The Adams bill being next taken up, the controversy was renewed and ranged over the whole field of political economy. Ultra southerners belittled the really conciliating features of this bill because it left the principle of protection unaltered; and many argued as though it would lay taxes which it actually took off. After a long and earnest discussion, the
June 27. bill passed the House with few amendments by 132 to 65. The Senate concurred late in the session, 32 to 16; and with this impressive sanction by a vote
July 9. of two to one in both branches the tariff bill went to the President.* It reduced the revenue by an estimated amount of $8,000,000, but in doing so encouraged the better fabrics of wool and cotton in which New England had began to compete with Great Britain. It took off or cut down various duties on southern plantation supplies; but cotton goods remained as before, while the duty on woollens was raised to 50 per cent., woollen yarn being taxed for the first time. Revenue reduction was placed as far as possible upon articles not produced at home; and while no positive language declared the protective system constitutional or expedient, the scope of the act might be taken as a direct but not offensive maintenance of that principle.†

While the Bank and tariff made the two chief issues of this long-drawn session, there was some lesser political skirmishing in public-land distribution and internal improvements. Of these topics, the former alone deserves our present scrutiny. The West, eager above all things for a generous and even prodigal allotment of the national domain, had no decided convictions upon the tariff question.

* See Cong. Debates; 42 Niles's Register.

† See Act, July 14, 1832.

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Hence a tendency under Jackson's rule to a sort of profligate bidding for western support by public-land favors. To form a coalition on such a basis and detach the West from New England was a governing impulse to that movement of 1829–30 which produced the famous passage between Hayne and Webster;* and scarcely had this twenty-second Congress warmed to its work when the southern free-trade interest appeared disposed to sacrifice the public lands wholly to the States in which they were situated for the sake of drawing over western votes. "A more stupendous and more flagitious project," writes Clay, "was never conceived;"† and Adams's comments by way of retrospect are equally severe.‡ The head and front, indeed the inventor of the land project so dear to the West was Benton, of Missouri, our first border statesman from beyond the Mississippi, and the project itself embraced besides this gift to the new States something far more tenable,—generosity to the individual settler upon the public soil. How the new policy fared, and the coalition of western and southern interests, we shall see later; but as Benton stood up for Jackson against all foes within or without the fold, there could be no western alliance under Calhoun's auspices. But the Senate played out a little game for political effect. Bibb, of Kentucky, an administration Senator, offered a resolution touching the policy to be pursued towards the public lands. One object seems to have been to embarrass the canvass of his colleague, for the Senate, contrary to precedent, referred this resolution to Clay's committee on manufactures. Clay did not shrink from placing his views on record. He reported adversely to Bibb's resolution upon both points of expediency embraced in the reference: (1) as to reducing the price of land to settlers; (2) as to transferring government territory to the several States within which it lay. Not to be outdone, however, in catering for popularity, he re- 1832. April.

* Vol. iii, p. 483.

† Clay, Priv. Corr., March, 1832.

‡ J. Q. Adams's Diary, 247.

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ported a bill of his own, which proposed a general distribution of the public-land revenue; an extra ten per cent. of this to go for internal improvements within the limits of the respective States where the land lay, and the residue to be divided *pro rata* as a gift among all the States of the Union in proportion to their representation in Congress. This measure, known henceforth as Clay's bill, passed the Senate after much debate by a vote of 26 to 18, and there the subject rested until the elections were over.* One party inclined to abandon land revenue practically to the new States and settlers, the other to distribute it among all the States.

Within two weeks of the session's adjournment President Jackson held in his hands the two momentous bills of the session: first in order, that which proposed rechartering the United States Bank; second, that for the new tariff. To force his hand, as it were, and prevent him from killing the former bill by retaining it silently, as though for want of time, the Senate resorted to a clever expedient. They declined acting on the joint resolution for adjournment until the bill had gone to the President, and then inserted the 16th of July as the date, so as to give him the ten full days, exclusive of Sundays, which the constitution prescribed, and thus compel him either to return the bill to Congress or permit it to become a law, regardless of his own wishes. This final device, and the whole strenuous canvass under Clay and Biddle which had led up to it, put Jackson upon his pride. It really looked, when the session opened, as if he felt disposed to curb his antipathy; but on the 10th of July, the very next day after the Senate had fixed the date of adjournment, he sent to that body his veto of the recharter, and from that time he fought the National Bank as St. George fought the dragon.

July 10.

Pennsylvania was the stake on which this long game depended; but Jackson knew that men applaud courage, and

* Cong. Debates; 1 Statesman's Manual.

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he staked his personal popularity against that of the corporation. For all this he was too sagacious a politician to harass at all points that State which all were wooing. The tariff he might not wholly commend. He preferred compromising, most likely, upon a lower range of duties. But he had avoided the strife of theories on this subject, as every administrator should, and rested mainly upon the necessity of a material reduction of the tariff, and of reducing it prospectively, so as not to injure any existing interest. Treating the present measure as one for practical reduction, he gave it his prompt approval. July 14. Congress, to be sure, might have passed the bill over his veto, had he returned it; but, on the other hand, he could have defeated it at this late stage by simply retaining it in silence, without returning it at all.

Well has it been observed of Jackson on this occasion that his bank animosity superseded every other animosity for the time being; and his independence was the more remarkable in that the majority of the cabinet wavered. One of them was a friend of the Bank, and of all of his confidential advisers only Benton, Taney, Blair, and Kendall sustained him at all lengths.* The veto message, which stated the President's reasons for refusing his signature to the bill for recharter, made various specific objections, besides the hackneyed one that a national bank was unconstitutional. July 10. The monopoly, he thought, was sold too cheap at $3,000,000, the bonus here provided. Why should one set of men have it, when the franchise might have been put up to everybody at public auction? And as for the existing bank, foreigners held too much of its stock, nor had suspicions of mismanagement been laid at rest by the hasty scrutiny which the House had ordered. The bearing of these comments was to set the poor against the rich, and to hold up the Biddle ring to odium.

Upon this message, which was able and spirited, and not over-scrupulous, the foes of the administration in the

* 3 Parton's Jackson.

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1832. Senate made a last desperate assault. Clay, Webster, Clayton, of Delaware, and Ewing made every effort, not to carry the bill over the veto, for this could not be at present, but to bring reproach upon the President, and make up a clear issue for an appeal to the people. Distress, financial ruin was upon us, should the Bank be forced to wind up when its present charter expired, calling in all its debts, and withdrawing its capital, much of which was owned by government or abroad, from the money centres; and the defeat of Andrew Jackson at the polls was invoked as the only means left the country for averting a great calamity. Benton upheld the veto, and so did White, of Tennessee. There were sharp personalities in this debate. Clay assailed Benton vehemently as the bitter foe of Jackson in former times, and alluding to a duel they had once fought, whose marks Benton still carried on his person, taunted him with having said, in 1825, that if Jackson were elected President our legislators would have to guard themselves with pistols and dirks. Benton pinned the charge as "an atrocious calumny," and an angry scene followed.*

July 13. This heated discussion of the veto message lasted until July 13, when the Senate divided on the question of passing the bill over the President's objections, and it was lost, two-thirds not voting in its favor.†

1832. An unguarded expression which the President used in this veto message was used against him with all the effect possible. Alluding to what so many had said, that precedent and the decision of the Supreme Court ought by this time to have settled the point that a national bank was constitutional, to this conclusion he said he could not consent. "If the opinion of the Supreme Court," he added, "covered the whole ground of this act, it ought not to contest the co-ordinate authorities of this government.

* 42 Niles, 378–380. It was a singular circumstance, that, while Benton was here battling for the President, Jackson submitted to a surgical operation, and had Benton's bullet extracted from his left arm. 3 Parton's Jackson, 415.

† Debates of Congress; 1 Statesman's Manual. The yeas were 22, and the nays 19.

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The Congress, the Executive, and the court must each for itself be guided by its own opinion of the constitution. Each public officer who takes an oath to support the constitution swears that he will support it as he understands it, and not as it is understood by others." 1832. If, was the natural reply, every one in authority is to construe the law privately for himself, and to enforce it accordingly, what sanction of their rights have the American people to depend upon better than the arbitrary will of a despot?

Congress adjourned in an angry mood on the 16th of July, and the passions excited by the bank veto and the protest of eloquent Senators against it were soon diffused through the country. The ranks were forming already for the campaign which should decide the Presidential issue. Nor was that issue made up of many elements as between the adherents of Clay and Jackson. Tariff was not in controversy except for a hint of protection as the true theory, for here Clay's laurels were shared by the President, who had signed the bill sent him, and now held the stronger position of the two, because of his reserve on that question. Neither on the public lands nor internal improvements could the line be drawn. But, almost instinctively, the poor, the ignorant, the simple, rallied around the old warrior, while the rich, the cultured, the respectable, looked to Clay for their leader. These opposite affinities were all the stronger, because, after all, the only bold and striking point of dispute was whether or not the United States Bank and its present managers should gain a new lease of power. Monopoly, no matter how beneficent or how needful to public operations, is a heavy load for a party to carry through a popular canvass. But the gallant Clay bore the Bank on his shoulders, like another Atlas, and Biddle flattered him to his full bent.* In his innate dread of a private money July–Nov.

* Clay, Priv. Corr., 341. Biddle's letter, Aug. 1, 1832, says of the veto

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power, in league with the government, whose influence tends inevitably to corruption, was the consummate sense of Jackson's position on this question, for of financial substitutes and of finance itself he was densely ignorant.

But the opposition party had based their appeal to the people on other grounds. The military chieftain had poi-
1831-32. soned the fountain of civil honor. He had prostituted the appointing power to reward unfit or profligate men for their personal attachment, had thrust out officers of known honesty and capacity, had involved his court circle in quarrels and scandals. His costly embassies abroad, his cunning countenance to attacks made upon the judiciary power, his refusal to execute treaties with the Indians, and the unexampled dissolution and rearrangement of his cabinet for personal reasons were counts in the indictment against him. Leaving this lawless, demoralizing States-rights administration, the people should return to a more compact Union, to the internal-improvement plans of 1825, to respect for the Supreme Court as the final arbiter of disputes short of civil war, to peace, order, and a competent government.

Such was the platform of principles over which Clay's followers unfurled for the last time the banner of "National Republicans." All the fragments of that once formidable party had by 1831 rallied under him as the only man who could possibly lead it again to victory. Political meetings in the spring of 1831, and the later gatherings of the friends of American industry, had ushered in the national convention at Baltimore, held in December, 1831, over
1831. Dec. 12. which that respected citizen, James Barbour, of Virginia, presided. Here Clay was unanimously nominated for President, and John Sergeant, of Philadelphia, a man of unswerving integrity, for Vice-

message that he is delighted with it; it has "all the fury of a chained panther, biting the bars of his cage." Clay, he prophesied, would be an instrument of deliverance from these miserable rulers.

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President.* An address was issued to the people arraigning the Jackson administration severely. As events turned in the Congress which had assembled a week earlier, it was unfortunate that both these candidates, and some of the leading presses, too, which supported the ticket, were assailable in return as recipients in some way of the Bank's favors.

While these opposition elements had little cohesion, Jackson ruled his own followers with a rod of iron. 1831-32. Many still called this party by the old familiar name of "the Jackson" or "the Jackson Republican" party, but the word "Democratic," once affixed for reproach, and deprecated, this section of the old Jefferson Republican fold, into which Monroe had absorbed all parties, fearlessly accepted in 1832. Jackson, then, and not Jefferson, was the first avowed leader of the American Democracy; and the national party that now gathered to conquer under Jackson by the noble name of Democrat, though ruled by southern ideas, has never been dissolved nor failed of a standard-bearer. Of this, his own party, Jackson was now by common consent the candidate for re-election as President; and following the second-term movement, begun in his favor by Pennsylvania and New York in 1830, as already noted,† Illinois, Alabama, and most other States in turn nominated him, either by the legislature or in popular convention. The only need at all for a national gathering of his party at this time was to nominate a Vice-President as the associate of his ticket. This was a matter of much concern, and if events had taken their course, would have made a perplexing rivalry, even with Calhoun out of the way. But a false move of Jackson's opponents in the Senate, whose minds were dazzled sometimes by too brilliant a lustre, made all easy. We can little doubt that Van Buren was Jackson's preference; the same politic reasons, however, which had sent him abroad operated against bringing him back so soon. But Clay, Calhoun, and Webster, who controlled the Senate when united, put their heads together,

* 41 Niles; newspapers of the day. † Vol. iii, p. 497.

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and agreed to put a slight upon Van Buren by rejecting his nomination to the English mission. Each of the triumvirate had his own motive, but whether to spite the President, take revenge upon a rival, or harass the Democracy, they seem to have agreed that to mortify Van Buren by recalling him thus would send a dangerous competitor into private life and cut short his lucky career. When the committee on foreign relations reported various names favorably which the President had sent in, Van Buren's among the rest, the Senate confirmed the other nominations, but laid that of Van Buren on the table. The opposition to Van Buren rested mainly on three grounds: that he had the chief agency in breaking up the late cabinet; that he was responsible for introducing the New York proscriptive principle into national appointments; and that in negotiating while Secretary of State for the West India trade he had taken the side of Great Britain against his own country.* Several of Calhoun's friends took part with those of Clay and Webster; Calhoun himself presided, and did not speak; but his views were well understood, and more than once his casting vote was given against Van Buren with great alacrity.† After a full discussion with closed doors, the Senate, by the Vice-President's casting vote, resolved not to confirm the nomination.

1832. January.

Jan. 25.

The injunction of secrecy taken off, and the speeches given to the press, the sequel showed quickly that the public eye is keen to penetrate mean motives, let the wise disguise them as they may. A distant rival, who might, perhaps, have lost his grip on affairs, if left at the post assigned him, where no laurels grew, was recalled by enemies at the most opportune moment for his friends to turn the affront to his advantage. Jackson responded warmly to an indignant expression from the New York legislature

* See vol. iii, p. 503.

† "I heard Mr. Calhoun say to one of his doubting friends, 'It will kill him, sir, kill him dead. He will never kick, sir, never kick.'" 1 Benton, 219.

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on this subject.* He defended his late Secretary with dignity. Van Buren, so far as he knew, had no share whatever in producing the differences between himself and the Vice-President and the late dissolution of the cabinet, nor any agency in procuring the removals from office which the President had seen fit to make; his efforts in the cabinet had always been to produce harmony among his colleagues, and his resignation was a sacrifice of official station to the public interest. As to the West India negotiation, Jackson assumed the responsibility for all the instructions which had issued from the State department, and of the result gained thereby the administration certainly had no reason to feel ashamed.† Feb.

Van Buren's example had served, no doubt, for introducing the New York system of party discipline into national politics, for the old warrior chief much admired the skill that could handle political followers so as to make them march with the precision of an army corps; yet it would appear that in the cabinet Van Buren's influence had really been to curb instead of urging on, so as to keep the great machine running with a well-oiled deference to public opinion. It was for this smooth and dexterous management of affairs, so unlike his own headlong violence, that Jackson, who valued all opposites of character that he could attach to offset his failings and help round out his perfect triumph, came in these days to esteem Van Buren so highly, and, indeed, beyond his deserts. Van Buren's ambition was not fretful, but could serve and wait; had it been otherwise, the master's intuition would have detected it; and being of all who ministered to his success the nearest to the type of scholar and statesman, the master felt a zeal to reward him most. Van Buren 1832.

* See 42 Niles, and newspapers of the day. Benton quotes a letter of similar tenor which Jackson wrote from the Hermitage afterwards, in 1840. 1 Benton's View, 217.

† Ib. See also vol. iii, pp. 392, 503; Benton, 216. That passage in Van Buren's instructions which gave offence as a surrender of our case was copied almost literally from a former despatch of Gallatin's in 1826 to Secretary Clay.

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bore his painful affront from the Senate with a suave and tranquil temper which did him honor. For the first time in history an American who had just presented his credentials, and that at the court where countenance was the hardest, was forced to take a mortifying departure. He left London highly complimented; he landed in New York again like any dignified citizen whose mission is ended. The people took their own action to correct this injustice.

May 21-23. The Baltimore convention of the Democrats having met the May following to place a Vice-President on the ticket with Jackson, Van Buren, in the face of all rivalry, was nominated by more than two-thirds of the convention, and this with apparently no effort whatever on his own part. Benton's remark to one of the Senators who voted for rejection under the painful sense of duty which was so epidemic seemed in a fair way to be fulfilled: "You have broken a minister and elected a Vice-President."*

1832. Long, then, before the adjournment of Congress, and while the fate of the Bank recharter and tariff remained in suspense, the two national parties had selected their nominees. The flag of the Jackson party or "Democrats" bore the names of Jackson and Van Buren; that of the "National Republicans" emblazoned Clay and Sergeant. The Democracy or Jackson Republicans (for many of this party still adhered to the name of "Republican," which Jefferson made historical) gloried in the foreign and domestic policy of their chief, the near extinction of the debt, the correction of centralizing tendencies, and above all, in Jackson's personal popularity. The "National Republicans," comprising chiefly the Adams men of 1828, promised to turn back the rising flood of misrule,

* 1 Benton, 215. As to this Democratic convention of May, 1832, see 42 Niles. Van Buren's chief competitors were Philip P. Barbour, of Virginia, and Richard M. Johnson, of Kentucky. Many of the party disliked Van Buren; Virginia preferred Barbour; Pennsylvania had already put up Wilkins. But on the strength of the President's wishes, and the dishonor done to him by the Senate, the convention came to Van Buren's support. See 3 Parton's Jackson.

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and administer affairs in a broad and generous spirit worthy a nation of such exalted destiny. But a third party now stood across the opposition path to the dismay of Clay's lax following; one, in fact, of those rare but recurring phenomena in our politics, which, like a comet spacing the sky, betokens some mighty convulsion, and then disappears to falsify and be forgotten. This was the Anti-Mason party, already alluded to,* which by 1832 had gathered boldness enough to throw its whole force into the national encounter, there to perish ignobly. Its cradle was in western New York, and its first object of existence that of bringing supposed assassins to justice. 1826.
For, to go back to the beginning of the movement, William Morgan, a poor bricklayer at Batavia, undertook, in 1826, to publish a volume exposing the secrets of the Masonic order, of which he was a member. He took out a copyright in his name, and his intention to publish being spread abroad, others of this powerful order, whose oaths are held sacred, conspired against Sept.
him. They had him arrested on some slight pretext, and then searched his house for his manuscript. They robbed the clerk's office of papers with the same object in view, set fire to the printing-office where the book was supposed to be in press, and a second time used petty process to put Morgan in jail. As preconcerted, Sept. 11, 12.
the second suit was discharged and the prisoner released. During the evening the conspirators seized him outside the court-house in the dark, throttled him, stifled his cries, and hurried him off in a close carriage, after which he was never again seen alive. An intense excitement was aroused among Morgan's friends and 1826.
neighbors, which spread far and wide. Committees of vigilance were formed, and the kidnappers and their victim were soon traced from Batavia to Fort Niagara, near Lewiston, whence, most likely, after a fruitless effort to induce a lodge of Masons on the Canadian shore to take him in charge, he was taken out in a boat and

* Vol. iii, p. 439.

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drowned at night in Niagara River.* A body was afterward found floating in the stream which several identified as Morgan's body. This identification the Masons sneered at as a device of the politicians; they always denied a murder, though admitting the abduction; but Morgan they never produced nor accounted for him. Three or four of these abductors were convicted, but no one was convicted of murder, and the Masons, as a body, seemed so much bent upon baffling justice and stifling all inquiry that the heinous discipline was treated as their own.†

Nothing like the infliction of a specific wrong has the effect of stirring up a people's wrath against the abuses of organized power. Masonry, as an institution older than Solomon's temple, has attracted the great and good of many centuries, through the strangely-fascinating spell of mystery, oaths, and a world-wide organism; and so long as that association promotes charity, religion, and brotherly attachment, its ceremonial rites and inspired pretensions may be indulged. But if Masonry perverts secret affiliation to political ends its principle is utterly opposed to the sense of popular government, which moves in the light of day, appeals to the whole mass for support, and values power only for public ends; and whenever the laws for social protection are defied, and discipline resorts to secret abduction and assassination, society may well hunt down the fanaticism. Humanity was strong in the American. The secret disappearance of one humble fellow-citizen from a rural village kindled a passion strong enough to threaten at this time the eradication of all secret unions

* See N. Y. Sun, Nov. 28, 1882, Thurlow Weed's deposition.

† Richard Rush wrote, July, 1831, that not one of the men convicted in New York State of kidnapping Morgan had been expelled from the lodge to which he belonged. See J. Q. Adams's Memoirs, July 11, 1831. And see W. H. Seward's Autobiography; Morgan's Masonry, 2d ed., with narrative and depositions. Morgan's book was printed "for the author," and appeared with an anonymous introduction. This book as issued was little more than a simple catechism, giving the ceremonies of opening a lodge, initiation, and examinations for degrees, etc.

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from the face of our society,—a grand but impossible attainment; and the climax of resentment was reached when John Quincy Adams and Judge Story strove together in 1831 to expel the Phi Beta Kappa,* with its secret rites of initiation, from Harvard College. While the excitement lasted many Masonic lodges and chapters were discontinued, and their charters surrendered; but the parent order issued a public declaration in defence of Freemasonry, and preserved the funds. This moral agitation brought strong souls together, young and old, whose junction casts a long shadow on the dial of our politics. From existing parties they stood aloof; and the ex-President spoke for many when he avowed his belief that the dissolution of Freemasonry in the United States was of more importance to this age and posterity than the question whether Clay or Jackson should be the next President.†

The first great advance of the Anti-Masonic cause was made in New York State, where the new party, which polled over 33,000 for governor in 1828,‡ increased this vote to 70,000 in 1829 and to 128,000 in 1830. Francis Granger, a man of fine presence and graceful manners, such as set off talent to the best advantage, was now their candidate. The agitation having spread to neighboring States, the Anti-Masons at last organized as a national party opposed to the Jackson administration. Young Seward, a western New York man, like Granger, threw himself into this movement, together with Thurlow Weed, a struggling journalist, who about this time set up a newspaper in Albany to open fire upon the Democratic regency. A State convention was held at Utica which framed a platform of national principles. A national convention followed in Philadelphia, whose business it was to call another national convention on a larger scale to meet a year later.§

1828-30.

1830.

August.

The Anti-Masonic sentiment had been rapidly increasing in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Vermont, and this

* 8 Adams's Memoirs, 378, 381.

† Ib.

‡ Vol. iii, p. 439.

§ 39 Niles.

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third party tied up the two others. New England States, where still a majority was required to elect to office, now became knotted up in queer triangular contests whose lesson led slowly to the plurality rule of later times. Twelve trials failed in Massachusetts to elect a member of Congress from an Essex County district. Rhode Island went for months without a governor, until, on the fifth experiment, a choice was made in the spring of '33. Vermont had troubles of the same kind. In some States the elections took a quadrangular shape; but this waste of time and money at the polls was chiefly due to the division of "Democrats," "National Republicans," and "Anti-Masons." Governor Lincoln, of Massachusetts, for writing a letter which displeased the Anti-Masons, nearly lost his re-election in 1831, and did not run again.

1831–33.

Some of Clay's friends, who watched the signs, had urged him in season to conciliate these Anti-Masons, while others had hoped to unite the elements hostile to Jackson upon some different candidate. Neither effort availed. Clay refused to be interrogated by the Anti-Masons, nor would his fiery followers desert him. The Anti-Masons made their own overtures elsewhere; and among Clay's past associates they found several men of eminence who either loved him less or the new movement more. Of these, Justice McLean was too cool-headed to take a nomination when he saw that he could not unite the opposition. Richard Rush would have been the candidate, but he pointedly refused, and for this and his softness towards Jackson Adams never forgave him. The ex-President himself had courage enough to run, but the young politicians would not risk one so unpopular. In fine, when the Anti-Masons met in 1831 at Baltimore, the first of parties in this canvass to nominate national candidates, William Wirt, that next noble Roman of the Monroe days, was taken up for President, and Amos Ellmaker, of Pennsylvania, for Vice President. Wirt, an Anti-Mason in the sense that he had neglected without abandoning the order to which he belonged, shared in the amiable hope of an indorsement from the National Repub-

1831. Sept. 26–28.

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licans whom these young men forestalled, and to suit him the platform was lowered a little in pitch. The National Republicans being with one voice for Clay, first, last, and always, Wirt's position after their convention became an awkward one. He did not withdraw, and he had no chance to be elected. His name went for nothing in the canvass but to help out local combinations.*

Anti-Masonry meant very little from the national point of view, and Clay's tart comment was a just one, that the constitution of the United States gives the government no right to interfere one way or another with Masonry. Yet the Anti-Masons have left a memorable impression. This was the first of our moral-idea or one-idea parties, such as leaves the business of government alone. Their Utica convention of 1830 was the first in our history to frame a platform of principles in place of the lengthy address to the people hitherto in fashion and kept up longer by the old parties. Their Philadelphia convention of the same year, which numbered 96 delegates, over whom Granger presided, was the first of our national political conventions, and even their later one of 1831 was the earliest in the field with a Presidential ticket which was offered to the American people under the sanction of national delegates. Thus had we gone in presenting Presidential candidates from the nominating contrivance of congressional caucus to that of State and legislature, and from that of State and legislature to the popular expedient of a national convention. None of these processes quite express the popular will, yet here invention has stopped. And in this Anti-Mason party, besides the illustrious sympathizers who were canvassed for the higher office, and its middle-aged men of experience, like Granger and John C. Spencer, we see at Baltimore, where they met in 1830 for the first time, William H. Seward and Thaddeus Stevens, young men

* See 2 Kennedy's Wirt; Sumner's Jackson, 254; 40 Niles; Adams's Diary, Aug.–Nov. 1831; W. H. Seward's Autobiography. In the Anti-Masonic convention of Sept. 1831, Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania were fully represented; the total number of delegates present was 112.

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born to lead in politics, whose whole lives were bound up in the future. Following close upon Clay's nomination, a young men's convention met at Baltimore to ratify the choice; but of all the unfledged conservatives that gathered there not one ever found a niche in fame's temple like these scions of Anti-Masonry.

1831.

One or two more facts may attest the new progression of national parties at this period. The last vestige of the primitive theory that electoral colleges should make their independent choice of a President disappeared under the practice which party managers established in 1832, of pledging all State electors in advance to support the ticket on which their names were placed. The Democrats adopted still another rule of serious presage for coming years; that, namely, of requiring their party candidates for national office to command a two-thirds vote at the nominating convention. By this rule was governed the first national convention the Democracy ever held, and Van Buren's nomination for Vice-President was the case where they first applied it. To this period we may also ascribe in men of all parties a rapid advance towards the doctrine of administering affairs by party obligations; for it seemed in 1831 to plain people a strange breach of official decorum when, for the first time, members of the legislature, and even the governor in New York State, were heard declaring their duty in this respect.

The campaign of 1832, in spite of a cholera summer, was urged with spirit, and it ended in the triumphant re-election of Andrew Jackson and the complete discomfiture of his party foes. State after State held its national election, for in these times there was no uniform day prescribed for the choice of Presidential electors, though electoral colleges were afterwards to cast their votes on the same day in December. By November 17 the result might be fairly concluded; but returns arrived slowly all the month through the lumbering mails. At last the figures were all at hand, and the totals could be footed. Out of a popular vote of about 1,217,691

1832.

November.

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for the two chief candidates, Jackson's majority was 157,313, being a gain of more than 19,000 on his vote four years before,—one State, Alabama, voting unanimously for him. Of the electoral votes, Jackson secured 219 against the 178 cast for him in the year 1828, sweeping the whole West and South, with the exception of Kentucky. Besides his own State, where he was loved to idolatry, Clay won Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Delaware, and divided the electoral college in Maryland; only 49 votes in all, however, and not a quarter part of Jackson's number.* Van Buren, for Vice-President, received the same overwhelming vote as Jackson, except for Pennsylvania's 30 electors, who had been pledged to a favorite son, William Wilkins, against him. Van Buren was disliked in the Keystone State, nominally for his views on the Bank recharter and the tariff, which squared as closely as possible to those of Jackson himself; but Jackson's popularity in rural Pennsylvania was something altogether unique, having no relation to any opinions he might profess. The campaign experience of this State was singular. Its "Democratic Republican" convention at Harrisburg in March, 1832, unanimously nominated Jackson for President, Wilkins for Vice-President, and Wolf for governor. Wolf, like Jackson, was a regular candidate for re-election, but he had many enemies in his own party; Joseph Ritner opposed him, with the aid of the Anti-Masons and revengeful Van Burenites. In the State contest he succeeded by barely 3000; but when the national one followed October. soon after, Jackson on his war-horse rode down the combined opposition by a good 34,000 majority, and that, too, with Van Buren, his next in command, unhorsed and left in the rear.

In New York, as in Pennsylvania, National Republicans managed to fuse with the Anti-Masons on the State ticket. Granger was the nominee of the united opposition for governor. Against him the Jackson party placed a formidable candidate in William L. Marcy, a plain, honest,

* See Tables in Appendix.

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and sensible man, who had risen from humble life by his own exertions and devoted himself to Democratic politics.*

1832. It was he who, in the United States Senate, when Van Buren's nomination for the English mission was discussed, made that famous utterance, which is a party shibboleth to this day, "to the victors belong the spoils;" a formula which he used, however, in describing not Jacksonian but New York politics.† A casual phrase or incident has given many a notable citizen his stamp for life, and one of these was Marcy. In the New York canvass every inch of ground was warmly contested; hundreds of popular meetings were held, and unsparing were the jest and comment upon the regency candidate. But Marcy defeated Granger by about 12,000; and the Empire State chose Jackson electors besides. Here the safety-fund system of local banks aided the administration ticket.

In some of the States the preponderance of this national contest was very slight. Jackson's popular majority was less in New York than in Pennsylvania; Ohio was a close State; less than 200 votes turned the scales in Delaware for Clay, less than 500 in New Jersey for Jackson; Maryland was forced to divide her electoral vote. But for proud national traditions and the "Republican party of the world" this stand was the last for one generation. The bolder Democrat came out victorious. Jackson's strength with the great mass of the people was irresistible. They confided implicitly in his strong will and honest impulses. Clay might inspire the enthusiasm of wise men; but

* Marcy told an English traveller that he came into New York when a youth with but eight dollars in his pocket. Abdy's Travels. But he sprang from the Massachusetts yeomanry and was liberally educated at Brown University.

† See 43 Niles, 133. Marcy's speech in the Senate answered those who had urged the New York system of politics as a ground for rejecting Van Buren's appointment. The people of New York, he said, were not so fastidious as some. They boldly preach what they practice. When contending for victory, they avow their intention to enjoy the fruits of victory, and if defeated they expect to retire from office. "They see nothing wrong in the rule, that to the victors belong the spoils of the enemy."

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his cause was not so popular, and he suffered as brilliant statesmen often do, from the over-eagerness with which he chased the prize,—a fault which tempts one to jockey for advantage.

As for Anti-Masonry, the disaster was no less irreparable. Wirt and Ellmaker carried the little State of Vermont, with her seven electoral votes; and here for two or three years longer the little party exercised a ghostly domination, besides leaving a discordant and fragmentary element to operate in local politics elsewhere. But the failure of the Anti-Mason party to win either New York or Pennsylvania in 1832, under the brightest auspices, was a genuine disappointment to its too sanguine founders. There they had combined with other forces, while in Ohio the fight had been left to Clay and Jackson alone. No party founded upon such an issue was likely to have more than a temporary hold upon the quicksilver attention of the people. The Morgan mystery was smothered under later excitements; justice ceased its baffled pursuit; and the Masonic order, whose outrage was not repeated, gave bonds, as it were, to keep the peace, and quietly reorganized its lodges, renewed its regalia, and gradually recovered its influence. Jackson spoke well of that institution which numbered among members of eminence, living and dead, the peerless Washington. The fascinating communion of secret vows and dignities was revived, and the freedom to associate harmlessly; and in a country which had not been able to suppress the Cincinnati this more ancient association was permitted to flourish as though there were some national spell about it greater than the nation to keep men in one loyal brotherhood. Of political secret orders we had not yet heard the last nor the worst.

Through all this feverish contest the country had cast an anxious glance towards South Carolina, whose attitude all the while was in contemptuous defiance of national candidates and the national authority. Her legislature, sole proxy for the people, threw away the electoral vote of the State upon John Floyd, of Virginia, 1832.

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and Henry Lee, of Massachusetts, out of compliment to the State-rights sentiment of the one, and the free-trade creed of the other.* It seemed as if South Carolina were really reckless of the preferences of sister States, and cared not a straw who became President, so long as it could not be her favorite son. Calhoun's voice was that of the prophet in the wilderness. As a republican of '98, he stood aloof, with his State, from the present contention for honors. "I feel," he wrote, privately, "the deepest conviction that our politics must take a new direction, and that the government must be thoroughly reformed in every department within the next four years or our splendid political experiment will fail, and with it the best hopes of the human race."† More explicit was he in addressing his own fellow-citizens just before the Baltimore convention. A feast had been arranged in honor of "free trade and State rights." "I do most sincerely believe," wrote the Vice-President to its promoters, "that the cause of Carolina is the cause of the constitution, of liberty, and the Union. My opinion has not been hastily formed. It is the result of much reflection and long observation, and I am prepared to test its sincerity by sharing the fate of the State, be it what it may. Our government is clearly tending towards consolidation; and on consolidation, corruption, oppression, and finally monarchy must closely press. There is but one remedy, but I trust that it is sufficient to avert such calamities,—the reserved rights of the States. They are the only solid foundation of American liberty. On this rock our fathers placed it, and there let us be prepared to maintain it."‡

1832. May 14.

The root of all this bitterness was not far to seek. Calhoun and Calhoun's proud State saw the vast array of the people passing by without heed to their threats or their warning. The tariff act which passed in July with the general concurrence of our statesmen regarded not South Carolina's imperious demand, but the broad interests of

* See Tables in Appendix. † Monroe MSS., 1832; to Gouverneur.
‡ 42 Niles, 373.

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the country. Under that act concessions were made to the cotton-planter in the direction he desired, and it was hoped they would pacify him; but what rankled deepest was that the act itself seemed to preach not the free-trade theory, but protection. How real was the grievance of the nullifiers we have already investigated; but if a grievance existed, the act of 1832 made it less than the act of 1828; and rebellion was here invoked on the extraordinary ground, not that a new wrong was added, but that the old one which they had borne was not reduced to the full extent they desired. Nor was it so much that they suffered under this act as that Yankee thrift would be helped by it to build up New England's woollen mills; for on this point the Palmetto autocrat shared the childish petulance of John Randolph, who used to say in debate that he would go twenty rods out of his way to kick a sheep.

The rebellious torch was kindled by the South Carolina delegation in Congress the moment the new tariff act was sure to receive the President's signature. Hayne, Miller, McDuffie, Barnwell, and most others of that delegation issued a manifesto, dated from Washington, which, with forced calmness but phrase unfair, solemnly announced that Congress having now made the protecting system permanent, and all hope of redress from that body being irrecoverably gone, the sovereign power of South Carolina must determine whether this precious inheritance of rights from an illustrious ancestry shall be tamely surrendered without a struggle.* In response to this appeal, fierce meetings were held throughout the Palmetto State, Calhoun and his friends giving them direction on returning home at the close of the session. Union men and moderates, like Drayton, whose platform was free trade, but no violence, were borne down by this surge of passion; and all barriers burst, the legislature of the State at once passed into the control of the nullifiers, who had hitherto been in the minority. Governor Hamilton convened this legisla-

* July 13, 1832; 42 Niles, Nat. Intelligencer, etc. This manifesto was dated the day before the President signed the tariff bill.

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ture October 22, a month earlier than usual. While
Oct. 22–25. hickory-poles, transparencies, and the other paraphernalia of a Presidential campaign engaged the millions of the North, South Carolina's patrician legislature hastily ordered a State convention to meet at Columbia on the 19th of November following. This was the measure which nullifiers had urged but failed to carry two years earlier for want of the needful two-thirds strength in the legislature. This convention met at the time ap-
Nov. 19. pointed, and Governor Hamilton was chosen its president. It passed an ordinance on the 24th of November, which gravely declared the tariff acts of May
Nov. 24. 19, 1828, and July 14, 1832, null and void, and unenforceable in South Carolina after the 1st of next February.* Directly after this State convention ad-
Nov. 27. journed, the legislature reappeared on the spot, and passed the laws which were needful to put this ordinance in force; and to make resistance more effectual against the United States authorities the governor was authorized to call out the whole militia of the State, and to accept if needful the service of volunteers besides. Both legislature and convention had assembled at the State capital; and the perfunctory manner in which the legislature next proceeded to cast the electoral vote of South Carolina for national magistrates need not be wondered at.

Thus hastily was South Carolina plunged into the crisis of open and declared resistance to the laws of the Union; not as under the distorted precedent of '98, for the sake of thwarting criminal statutes which denounced death, banishment, and imprisonment, but so as to rob the general government of a revenue power rightful and indispensable to its proper maintenance. Five-sixths of the national income was derived at this period from the customs; and if Congress could not fix the rate of customs from time to time at discretion, whatever the economical theory, without

* See 43 Niles, 219, 231, etc.; Statesman's Manual, 997, etc.; 1 Benton's View, 297.

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exposing the federal collectors to violent hinderance in any ports circumscribed by State authority, the American people were once more in that paralytic and pitiable condition from which, most of all, the constitution of 1787 sought to relieve them. This haughty ordinance had these salient points: it forbade all appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States,* so as to leave South Carolina the sole arbiter touching the validity of her own nullifying ordinance; it pronounced the two obnoxious acts "utterly null and void" (one of them after a four year's submission, which should have precluded objection), and yet as to practical nullification postponed the operation for more than two months, in order to ascertain whether Congress, the President, and the other States would bend in submission; it concluded with the threat that upon any attempt on the part of the Union to coerce the State or to enforce the tariffs of 1828 or 1832 in her ports South Carolina would consider herself absolved from all further political obligations and proceed forthwith to organize a separate government. In short, there was a threat and an ultimatum, and the ultimatum was unconditional surrender or disunion.

Jackson was not the man to be put down by flimsy sophistries, nor to be terrified from performing his official duty. He saw that South Carolina challenged the authority and the very existence of the federal Union, and that the crisis must be courageously met. Having watched every step taken by Calhoun and his followers, his course of action was unhesitating, fortified, no doubt, by the belief that the people had extended his lease of power in token of their confidence. He quietly ordered General Scott to Charleston, and caused troops to be posted in a convenient vicinity, though not so near as to provoke a collision. He sent a sloop of war to Charleston to protect the officers of customs. He enjoined it

1832.

* An attempt had been made in the U. S. District Court in 1831 to test the tariff act of 1828 by refusing to pay duty bonds, but the result did not encourage the nullifiers to trust to judicial redress.

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upon the collector at Charleston to perform his duties with firmness and discretion. And on the 10th of December he issued a proclamation to the people of South Carolina, in which, after forcibly stating the nature of the federal supremacy, he earnestly adjured them as fellow-citizens of his native State not to provoke the Union to which they owed their allegiance by assuming a false and unfilial attitude.*

Dec. 10.

This proclamation, making an admirable State paper, was the joint composition of the President and his Secretary of State. Jackson dashed off the document hastily, sheet after sheet, with the big steel pen which he used to flourish so vigorously, and then handed it to Livingston for a more perfected finish. Livingston, who appears to have elaborated the constitutional argument, gave the instrument more dignity of expression. The general style in consequence was too chastened to be Jacksonian, and what was of more moment, the reasoning asserted the national or central authority more broadly than Jackson himself would have done; but his earnest expression gave to the paper, and more especially towards its close, a strain of natural eloquence whose pathos, broken by ejaculations, is tender and sincere. Livingston, in old age, with his plain dark clothes, white cravat, well-shaven face, peaceful dark eyes, and a general expression of courtesy and benevolence, was the image of moderation and propriety, while Jackson flashed fire to the last. Time pressed, and the President gave the proclamation to editor Blair, of the *Globe*, to print it at once. Livingston had reasoned like a Madisonian, but in these days Democrats were apt to draw the line between federal and State rights with scrupulous pains, lest they should be mistaken for Republicans. An editorial in Blair's paper which appeared soon after is supposed to have reflected the Presi-

* See President's message, Dec. 1832; Statesman's Manual, 997; 3 Parton, 460. Jackson had instructed the collector of Charleston how to act in an emergency, before the South Carolina convention met. 3 Parton, ib.

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dent's views on that question more accurately. Meanwhile, the principles of the proclamation were praised warmly and with singular unanimity by all men and all parties north of the Potomac; mass-meetings being held to sustain the President, in which party opponents like Webster and Chancellor Kent appeared; but the Virginia State-rights Democrats were in a quandary, while South Carolina's sons, foaming with rage, denounced the paper as the edict of a tyrant, and hurled back their heat-lightning defiance.* 1833. January. 1832. December.

Feebly as Virginia appeared to support the Union in this momentous hour, no State dared subscribe to the fallacies of the nullifying ordinance. The South Carolina convention, in justification of its course, had issued an address to the people of other States, but their condemnation, open or silent, was unanimous. Within her own borders South Carolina was threatened with civil war; for in Greenville the stars and stripes were hoisted and nailed to the mast; and a convention, which assembled in December at Columbia, protested, in the name of Union men of that State, against the ordinance which nullifiers and traitors had promulgated.† December.

Congress had reassembled before the President's warning proclamation came out, and while at the capital official tidings from South Carolina were still awaited with feverish suspense. Nullification absorbed the whole interest of the country, now that the national election was over. In the Senate chamber the Vice-Presi- Dec. 3.

* 43 Niles. Our text harmonizes authorities upon the authorship of the proclamation. *Cf.* Hunt's Livingston, 358, 371, which claims most for the Secretary of State. A draft of Livingston, with his own interlineations, is here mentioned, but such a draft is not inconsistent with a first draft by the President as a basis. Other testimony is uniform that the President wrote at much length, and handed his sheets to Livingston, who then elaborated, but not so as to meet Jackson's entire approval. See Rives in Globe (1856); Hudson's Journalism, 249; Tyler's Taney, 188; 3 Parton, 466, and citations.

† 43 Niles *passim*.

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dent did not appear on the appointed day, and Tazewell, of Virginia, late President *pro tempore*, having resigned his seat, the Senate chose Hugh L. White, of Tennessee, in his stead. The President's message, prepared as it was without positive tidings from South Carolina, passed the subject over lightly, but intimated that a fuller notice would be taken of affairs in that State when the situation more clearly developed. In the meantime, the President recommended a further reduction of duties, now that the public debt had reached nearly the point of extinction. This advice was warmly seconded by Secretary McLane, of the Treasury, whose report expressed the belief that a protecting tariff was not so needful now as it had been a year before. Conciliation to the South prompted this proposal, which received, however, a decided impulse from the election returns still fresh from the press; for the administration, now intrenched for a second term, might well present a bolder front on the tariff question than when forced, five months before, to keep Clay from combining the vote of Northern friends of industry in his favor. To Jackson, as to Benton, it seemed as if the vote of the people had condemned protection and the American system, and that what the country really desired and demanded was a still further reduction of the revenue and a still lower scale of duties.

Dec. 4.

The mild sentiments of the opening message struck no responsive chord in the hearts of the nullifiers,—another proof that they nursed disloyalty,—and when, a few days later, the President found that South Carolina had actually passed the ordinance and pushed on to the brink of rebellion without waiting to see what measures his message would recommend to Congress, his purpose hardened. The tariff of July, which had lashed this little State into such precipitate fury, was not to take effect by the terms of the act until the March ensuing. Did this look like the disposition "to suffer while evils are sufferable," as in '76, and not rather to drive headlong into revolution, and either browbeat the Union or force the experiment at once of secession, dissolution, and the formation of a Southern

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confederacy? Abundant harvests and multiplied blessings which the State enjoyed were owned in the governor's message. Apparently, these nullifiers had put their house in order; for an act of Congress passed in the same first session settled the claims of South Carolina which grew out of the war of 1812.* Now followed the President's warning proclamation, for which Livingston prepared the argument,—a paper so eagerly waited for in Washington that a crowd besieged the barred doors of the *Globe* office when it was put to press, until a thousand of the first copies had been thrown out of the windows to disperse them.† Jackson issued this address upon his official responsibility, and without asking Congress to frame a course or invest him with extraordinary powers. Dec. 10.

Not strange was it that men whose wits were sharpened on constitutional theories found it hard to reconcile this proclamation with the message of the previous week, the one being as pronounced against State rights as the other had been in their favor. Webster praised this last document without stint, but Clay wrote privately that while it contained some good things there were others in it he could not stomach.‡ To Adams, who noticed these "glaring inconsistencies," the message had been the real disappointment; for in that first utterance he thought that the President had cast away his former neutrality upon sectional conflicts and surrendered the Union to the nullifiers.§ Jackson's eloquent appeal to the misguided Carolinians we have seen incensed instead of soothing them. Hayne, who now succeeded as governor of the State, issued a counter-proclamation, very bitter in tone. Local volunteers were enrolled ready to take the field at a moment's warning, and South Carolina prepared to prevent by military force, if need be, the collection of the customs within her borders after the month of January. It was now Jackson's turn to show temper; but he kept

* Act March 22, 1832.
† Hudson's Journalism, 249.
‡ Clay, Priv. Corr., 345.
§ 8 J. Q. Adams's Memoirs, Dec. 1832.

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the decorum of his office, and prepared to crush this rebellion in its incipient stage and vindicate the laws of the land at every hazard.

Congress in the meantime had heeded the recommendation of the opening message and Treasury report on revenue reduction. In both Houses were many Democrats ready to pacify the South by any sacrifice of the tariff policy, and more whose honest preference for a lower standard of duties was too positive for any imputation to restrain them of surrendering to a rebel threat. Southerners themselves, whose instincts drew them together on sectional issues, deplored the false step and false theories of the sister State, but urged their brethren northward to yield something for the sake of the Union. In the House, Verplanck, of New York, a man of literary tastes, now serving politics for the last time, reported from the ways and means committee a bill based upon the views of the Secretary of the Treasury; it proposed a sweeping reduction of the duties, to take effect at once, with a further reduction, after 1834, to a scale of about 15 or 20 per cent. With the extinction of our public debt soon to occur, it was argued plausibly that thirteen millions, or about one-half the average income of the last six years, would carry on our national government sufficiently for the future, thus safely dispensing with at least seven millions more from the customs than the act of July was likely to cut off. Verplanck's bill would have adapted our tariff system to a revenue rather than protective standard, thereby allaying all discontent at the South. It was drawn, too, claimed its friends, so as fairly to satisfy the manufacturers,—not mere investors, perhaps, who were just turning capital into pursuits of which they knew nothing under the stimulus of the promised bounty, but men who were engaged in a manufacturing pursuit already and were practically familiar with it.

Dec. 27.

But to satisfy the manufactures on this last point was the difficulty. They claimed that the reduction proposed was too great and too sudden; that to retreat at this time

from a tariff deliberately adopted by immense majorities and not yet put to the test would be a breach of faith to those who had invested their money and skill in reliance upon its terms, besides being a cowardly surrender to rebellious citizens. The Verplanck bill, however, had the apparent countenance of the administration, and so large a majority in both Houses and the country at large as to ensure the passage of some such act now, or at all events in the next Congress; and the fear was that the low-tariff men would seize this crisis to lay the whole protection system in the dust.*

In January the President sent in a special message on the South Carolina situation, and fitted the iron glove to his policy. Convinced, at length, that mild specifics could no longer check the malady, he proposed that more stringent medicine, compulsion to authority. And that the Executive might be better equipped for the emergency, he asked Congress to pass a "force bill;" he wished power to remove a customs house at discretion, and hold imported goods for duties by military and naval force if resistance was offered; he wished the federal courts, moreover, clothed with more ample jurisdiction in revenue suits.† As he grew more intent upon this policy he seemed less concerned for the fate of the Verplanck bill, which indeed dragged heavily: his purpose was to crush the rebels. Benton would have it that the Executive embraced both measures alike, and held out the sword and olive-branch with equal stretch; but this leaves out both the sequence of experiments and Jackson's spirited temper; and we believe rather, like Webster, that the President no longer cared for a new tariff to pass, but wanted most of all the individual honor of stamping out nullification.‡ When taunts were added to disobedience, he realized how stubborn a game the Calhoun set were

1833. Jan. 16.

* See Annals of Congress; 1 Benton, 308, etc.; Statesman's Manual, 1008; 1 Webster's Priv. Corr., 1833.

† See Statesman's Manual; Executive documents; 1 Benton, 303.

‡ *Cf.* 1 Benton, 308, and Webster's Priv. Corr., 1833.

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playing to produce disaffection to the general government. Jackson's party pressed on, fearing the effect of the doctrines announced in his proclamation, and anxious to remove all ground of Southern complaint; yet for all this, Verplanck's bill lingered in the House, and the chances increased that Congress would expire, leaving the tariff unaltered, and the administration with a civil war on its hands.

Hayne, for the glow-worm lustre of State governor in such a crisis, resigned forever the senatorial life which had not yielded the fame he hoped for. In his place was chosen Calhoun, the arch-nullifier, who had surrendered the brief residuum of the Vice-Presidential office, which attracted him no longer. The vampire dogmatizer appeared in the Senate-chamber nearly a fortnight before the force-bill message of which we have spoken came from the White House, and while caucuses of National Republicans were considering how to stave off the Verplanck tariff which their constituents at home so much dreaded. On his way back from Charleston, and in this familiar capital, he encountered cold and covert glances from men once cordial in their welcome. Public curiosity was whetted to discover whether this Catilinian would hold up his right hand and swear to support the constitution. But Calhoun took the oath with quiet composure, and seated himself as if unaware of the piercing gaze which the whole audience fixed upon him at that same instant. Both he and McDuffie of the House were soon giving private assurances at every opportunity that South Carolina intended no bloodshed, but merely to resist civil process and block the federal courts. But when the force-bill message appeared the senator had good cause for alarm, and he was alarmed; for he knew that the hot wrath of the President singled him out, and that Jackson had threatened to have him arrested and hanged on a gallows as high as Haman. Calhoun could still be audacious in debate, but his audacity was dispassionate; his words were swords, while at every turn of war he proved himself unwarlike; and yet his demeanor betrayed no fear, his muscles re-

Jan. 4.

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laxed not, nor could his face blanch beyond its usual color.

His fellow-nullifiers at home, on the other hand, were full of loud bravado and defiance. "Enroll, good citizens," was here the cry of the press and politicians; "take up arms and show the enemy that South Carolina cannot be subjugated." Charleston volunteers mounted the blue cockade with a palmetto button in the centre. The war-like demonstrations continued. Yet, after all, the legislature limped far behind the ordinance.* Nullification was to have taken effect from February 1st, but the situation appeared still that federal officers might go collecting the revenue until some individual should refuse to pay and set the slow clock-work of the courts in motion. A revolution by lawsuit may be fought out with briefs; there lurked, however, a constant danger of armed collision, bloodshed, and consequent civil war. Once in January it seemed truly as if the fight would begin; but the nullifiers, following, perhaps, advices from Washington, concluded to wait and see what Congress would do; and on the last day of January they agreed, somewhat informally, at Charleston to suspend all action for the rest of the session, in the hope of gaining some accommodation. This did not prevent the legislature, to Jackson's annoyance, from resolving that he was a usurper and tyrant.† January.

Cooler counsels came, we suspect, from Calhoun himself. The President's last message on the subject produced a tremor among the nullifiers which they could ill conceal. They were chagrined, too, to find sister States of the South so ill-disposed to follow their lead that federal concert, the vital spark of a successful rebellion, could not be kindled. In vain had South Carolina blown the trumpet before the face of all people. Other legislatures tacitly or openly condemned her course. Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Delaware, Tennessee, Indiana, and Missouri de-

* So Webster expressed it. Priv. Corr., 1833.

† 43 Niles; Statesman's Manual; Sumner's Jackson; newspapers of the day.

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nounced nullification, in unmeasured terms, as an idea subversive of public order; while the voice of Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania opposed any change in the tariff at this time. North Carolina and Alabama, though wishing the tariff changed, repudiated the nullifying heresy; and Georgia's position was similar. Virginia alone took an equivocal stand, and showed already in degeneracy that pride of umpire between North and South, union and disunion, which in later years produced her dismemberment and shame. In the Pocahontas attitude, imploring South Carolina to desist, and the President not to strike, both, she insisted, were wrong and ought to leave to her the adjustment of the dispute.

When Jackson's force-bill message was read in the Senate, Calhoun earnestly repelled the imputation that South Carolina intended anything more by enrolling State troops than to defend her rights by legal process, unless the general government should employ troops against her. And by the time Wilkins, from the judiciary committee, reported a bill which clothed the Executive with the additional powers asked for, the new senator diverted immediate action from the subject by bringing forward a set of resolutions on the federal constitution. Hereupon he began dogmatizing upon the abstract right of nullification and secession, as though to put the whole revolution into chancery. Counter-resolutions were offered by Grundy and Clayton, by way of cross-bill, and the Senate plunged into a discussion as fruitless as it was bewildering, concerning the nature and elements of the composite government we lived under. Out of this fog-bank of *a priori* reasoning emerged two chief theories and two chief disputants: the disputants Calhoun and Webster; the theories that on the one hand the constitution was a league or compact, and acted upon States, that on the other hand it was no league, no compact, but acted upon individuals. Calhoun, whose native genius and desultory training made of him a political philosopher and empiric more than a practical lawyer, had grown to look upon our federal constitution more from the Roman than the English stand-

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point; and to the early Roman law, with its tribune power, and that historical secession of the dissatisfied, he now appealed to justify the resistance of a weaker section against the stronger.* The illustration was not a happy one, for not only had Roman institutions no clear counterpart to our own, but Roman secession and the creation of the tribune's veto were against patrician rule and in the interest of individual rights, that cause which creeps on over every republican system as resistlessly as the incoming wave of the ocean. Webster, on the other hand, foremost among legal practitioners, whose whole mould was English, rested more justly upon those maxims and manners of the common law which, most of all, inspired our political system. From Saxon loins could have sprung only a Saxon constitution; and Napoleon's cession of Louisiana, early in the nineteenth century, marks the first infusion of blood from Southern Europe into the veins of our body politic. But Webster, as a disciple of the old Federalist school whose demigod was Hamilton, took no pains to discriminate those composite elements of State and national influence which our ancestors had blended with such skill and nicety, but argued the case rather on the theory that the collective American people had ordained that to which a separate confederate assent gave the sanction, and as though by the sorcery of that sanction State sovereignty melted down to solidify into a nation. This conclusion he reached, moreover, by the unprofessional course of interpreting a written instrument by particular phrases, by a preamble instead of its general tenor. A statesman who believed in nullification as little as himself detected the flaw in the argument. To Webster's plea that the Union was a government of the people and not a compact of States, John Quincy Adams noted his dissent: "it is both, and all constitutional government is a compact."†

* For Calhoun's singular tenets derived from Roman history see 1 Benton, 334; Tyler's Taney, 102.

† 8 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 526.

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But the drift of Webster's argument and the effect of his splendid oratory at this time were to strengthen our federal system against the subtle poison which Calhoun was injecting for murderous ends. That the constitution designed a perpetual Union, like that confederate league which it superseded; that the growth of this Union tended inevitably to compact our political system so as to make the safety of the whole indispensable to that of every part; that nullification rested on no right higher than the right of revolution, or rather of civil war; that in any such contest of arms, if provoked by a minority, the instinct of self-preservation, all peaceful expedients failing, would rally under the national flag the larger part whose rightful preponderance in affairs had been challenged; and that the only sure refuge of the minority from oppression lay in obeying those forms and safeguards which the constitution clearly provided, whereby the weakest in a rightful cause might in the end prove strongest with that invincible umpire of our system, public opinion,—all these were home-truths for the hour which could not be impressed too deeply. The Senate debate ended where it began; but Webster towered at this moment like the guardian genius on the Acropolis.

These were glorious days for the eloquent senator from Massachusetts. With his fervent love for a broad and well-arched Union, his courage and matchless ability in debate for sustaining the national cause against open or covert disloyalty, he swept before him the wretched dogmas of the Carolina school before they could gain a lodgment with the people. Calhoun, like Hayne, had cause to dread him above all foemen in logical discussion. Webster's speeches of this period, though overwrought in the argument, served, like Pharaoh's granary, as the store-house for years of coming trouble. The disastrous overthrow of the Republicans at the late election released him for the moment from all party obligations. To use his own expression, he was now no man's leader, and he followed "no lead but that of public duty and the star of the constitution." President Jackson sought his strong aid in this

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emergency, and it was given; for, though averse to tariff retraction at this time, and especially to retraction under threats, he was for compelling submission, at all hazards, to the supremacy of the laws. Aid from Jackson's political opponents was essential, indeed, at this critical moment, for while the force bill was an administration measure, and as such was prepared and reported, Southern men and Jackson's immediate friends were chary of supporting it. A member of the cabinet, we are told, visited Webster at his lodgings about this time, and urged him earnestly to take an active part in its favor.* He did so, and to the dismay of the nullifiers made a strong speech on behalf of the force bill, refuting the objections which had been raised against it. Benton acknowledges the debt of gratitude which Jackson owed and felt on this occasion, and pronounces Webster the colossal figure on the political stage at this period.† Of Webster's consistency in this course not the shadow of a doubt remains: he carried out the rule of policy he had already foreshadowed in his discussion with Hayne, securing thus his proudest title, "defender of the constitution."

After a warm discussion, in the course of which Southerners who blamed the action of South Carolina denounced this administration measure violently as the "bloody bill," the "force bill," the bill "to repeal our constitution," with allusions to the Jersey prison-ship and Boston port bill of the revolution, it was pressed to a vote. The justice and expediency of passing such a bill was too obvious at the last for members to care to record themselves against it; Jackson's fiat, too, had already gone forth. Most opponents finally withdrew when the ballot was taken. The force bill, or bill for collecting the revenue, passed the Senate by 32 to 1, John Tyler alone casting his vote in the negative, and the measure then went to the House. The centennial birthday was at hand of the immortal Washington, whose

1833. February. Feb. 20.

* 1 Curtis's Webster, 451. † 1 Benton, 333.

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Feb. 22. remains on that occasion were to have been entombed under the capitol as a last resting-place. So Congress had proposed; but surviving relatives for a second time dissenting, the pageant did not take place, and Virginia kept the bones of her greatest son.

Upon nullification and the revenue collection bill Clay's clarion was not heard. Both he and his colleague were among the fifteen senators whose absence was conspicuous when the vote on the force bill was taken; and while admitting the propriety of such a measure, he himself declined to give it any countenance.* Another project had engrossed his attention, counter, indeed, to the purpose of the administration, but reflecting his natural disposition to bargain principles for the sake of unity. To prevent the President from "exercising his vengeful passions," as he termed it,† and in his own person pacify North and South was the task to which Clay now addressed his tact and energy. Like the eagle struck down, who shakes his pinions and prepares for a bolder flight, the defeated candidate of the opposition sought to disburden party politics at once of this whole tariff dissension which experience showed was a losing card to play for Presidential honors. Patriotism was a deeper impulse to this course; for of all statesmen who could appeal with effect to the national sentiment, Clay stood foremost, being a Southern man with Northern leanings, an adjuster of national differences, and in every fibre an American. On the 12th of

Feb. 12. February, while yet the force bill was pending, Clay introduced in the Senate what he called a compromise measure, and he sought to give it precedence over all other business. The essence of this compromise consisted in scaling down periodically the high duties pro-

* See Ketchum MSS. in 1 Curtis's Daniel Webster, 451. It appears that among the fifteen senators whose votes were not recorded on the passage of the force bill were Clay, Benton, and Calhoun. 44 Niles, 44.

† Clay's Priv. Corr., 348.

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posed by the act of July of which free traders complained, until, in the course of ten years, the tariff should stand reversed from a protective to a free-trade basis. The reduction was to be gradual every two years until 1841, when by a sharp stroke or two the duties on protected articles were to be cut down to 20 per cent. on a home valuation. An argument to support this bill was ready for everybody. Northern protectionists gained a respite for the manufacturing industries, which otherwise would be prostrated by the Verplanck low-tariff bill, whose passage either now or in the next Congress seemed inevitable. South Carolina had an assurance that protection would be given up. Party men would find the tariff diverted from national politics. And finally all lovers of the Union might by a timely sacrifice save their country from the danger of a civil war. Calhoun seconded the idea of legislating in the "spirit of mutual compromise."*

The first views of Clay's proposal carried dismay to Northern manufacturers. Their second thought was more favorable; but three-fourths of the tariff interest strongly disliked Clay's proposal, and blamed him for deserting their cause at this critical hour. They, like Webster and the President himself, were for compelling obedience to the laws as an issue paramount to all others. Webster had shown such disfavor when a modified tariff was first broached, that he was not taken into the confidence of those who developed it. In truth, this compromise was the immediate fruit of a coalition patched up between Clay and Calhoun, mainly to rescue the latter and his State from the dangerous climax to which events were tending. Early in the session Clay appears to have had a plan in mind somewhat different for quieting this tariff question;† but the present plan took its color from an interview which Clay and Calhoun had together after Calhoun's arrival at the seat of government February.

* Cong. Debates, Feb. 1833.

† See 1 Curtis's Webster, 434, 451, which prints a letter of Daniel Webster's, dated in 1838; Clay's Priv. Corr., 348.

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to take his seat for the first time as a fellow-senator. Jackson's threat to arrest and try the arch-nullifier for treason came to Calhoun's ears, and in alarm he sought a conference.* John M. Clayton, a senator from Delaware, and Letcher, of the House, who was Clay's constant deputy, both helped arrange a coalition of the chiefs, aided, most likely, by other Southerners who deprecated coercion, and exhorted Clay to wear the crown of mediator.† An interview, says Benton, took place in Clay's room; it was cold, distant, and civil, for Clay and Calhoun had not been on speaking terms;‡ but as the upshot of the business Clay had the bill which he first presented referred to a select committee, upon which Calhoun and Clayton were joined with him. This committee reported the tariff compromise bill to the Senate, Feb. 19th, with various amendments agreed upon.§ A strange compromise, nevertheless, was this which excluded Webster and the industries for which but a few months earlier the tenderest solicitude was shown. Webster introduced resolutions against horizontal reduction and

Feb 13.

Feb. 19.

Feb. 23, 24.

* Crittenden is an authority for this story, which other circumstances corroborate. 1 Curtis's Webster, 444; 1 Benton, 342.

† In 1 Tyler's Tyler, 457, the honor of suggesting the compromise is given to John Tyler, who, in 1855, when ex-President, claimed the glory for himself, alleging that it was he who brought Clay and Calhoun together. But this statement should be taken with much caution, for it is not corroborated. Tyler, at least, took the tone of the Virginia press and legislature, his re-election to the Senate then pending, and in a speech of early February he made a rhetorical appeal to Clay to save the Union by bringing in such a measure. Tyler voted alone against the force bill, and lashed the administration for trying to enforce the laws against South Carolina. It may be observed that Clay wished to bring over State-rights men of this stripe who were not pronounced nullifiers, and that he wrote to his own friends in Virginia in favor of Tyler's re-election. Clay's Priv. Corr., Jan. 1833.

‡ 1 Benton, 342.

§ See Hugh L. White's Memoirs; 3 Parton's Jackson, 478, as to the manner in which White as President *pro tem.* made up this committee.

The details were only completed a few days ago (wrote Clay, February 14th), but the principle of the bill he had long since settled. Clay's Priv. Corr. 1833.

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the attempt to pledge future legislatures to a particular tariff, and showed by his comment upon the bill of Clay's committee that he had not been consulted in the arrangement, and would not be bound by it.

Taken up in the Senate for discussion soon after the passage of the force bill, but objected to as a revenue measure which the House alone could lawfully originate, this compromise bill lingered for admission. The popular branch had meantime been spinning out its tedious debate over the Verplanck measure for tariff reduction and low duties. On Monday, the 25th of February, the "revenue collection" bill had just been made the special order for Tuesday. The tariff was then taken up. Suddenly, and without giving previous notice of his intention, Letcher arose in his place, the House being about to adjourn, and moved to strike out all of the Verplanck bill except the enacting clause and insert what in effect was Clay's compromise tariff, now knocking at the door of the Senate. Vainly did representatives of Northern manufacturing districts, like John Davis, of Massachusetts, protest in amazement; for the movement had been well planned, and under the lead of Clay's skilful manager the majority of the House proceeded quickly to consummate the business by recommitting the pending bill to the committee of the whole, with instruction to report the compromise bill in its place. An engrossment of the measure thus amended was carried before the House adjourned; and on the next day the substituted bill was carried by 119 to 85 and went to the Senate. That body dropped at once the bill which Clay had been trying to introduce, put the House bill in its place, drove that measure to a final vote, and despite all opposition, carried the compromise tariff in triumph by 29 to 16 on the first day of March. Letcher's argument had been that if the present Congress did not pass this bill the next Congress would do worse by the manufacturers. While the Senate thus wrestled with the question of revenue rates, the House struggled violently over the bill for collecting the

Feb. 21.

Feb. 25.

Feb. 26.

March 1.

revenue. That bill was carried the first day of March, by 149 to 48, against the Southern ultras; McDuffie proposing in bitter irony an epitaph on the constitution to serve for its title.* The passage of the force bill, as part of the compromise, was needful to placate the President and save the self-respect of the legislature. With these two measures before him and the session so nearly ended, Jackson pursued the only practicable course short of taking the burden of civil war upon his own shoulders. He coupled these acts together as the announcement of a policy, and signed them both on the 2d of March.† And thus were extended to rebellious South Carolina (as a late writer well expresses it) "the olive-branch and the rod bound up together."‡

Feb. 26–March 1.

1833. March 2.

We are not to imagine, however, that this two-faced Janus which was now reared upon its legs to preach submission to the law on one side and the law's submission on the other received homage as a deity on all hands. Indeed, members of Congress who committed themselves to the one measure would spurn or refrain from the other. The New England and Middle State delegations were generally against the compromise tariff and in favor of the force bill, while those from the South voted the other way; it was the Western vote alone which was pledged to both measures. Massachusetts and Pennsylvania protectionists were left free, therefore, to re-establish their favorite system on the first opportunity, while South Carolina, on the other hand, reproached every effort to coerce by enforcing the laws. This whole compromise arrangement was a juggling expedient after all to maintain peace at the least

* Cong. Debates. Wayne had been on the administration side in all this controversy. Letcher, of Kentucky, voted for the force bill, but Wickliffe, a colleague, voted against it.

† See Acts March 2, 1833; also Congressional Debates; 44 Niles's Register. Dates and figures in the text which some authorities have inaccurately stated are carefully verified by the present writer.

‡ Sumner's Jackson.

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sacrifice. As between Clay and Calhoun the truce was a hollow one, and in their disputes ten years later on this same floor of the Senate chamber, revealing the fact of a secret compact at this time between them, each contended that he had gained the better of the other. Calhoun asserted that in 1833 he had Clay down on his back —was his master. "He my master!" retorted Clay; "I would not own him for the meanest of my slaves." South Carolina's spirited resistance, Calhoun claimed, had frightened the high-tariff party. Clay laughed to scorn this spirited resistance and the South Carolina militia, who, he said, were like little boys going about with wooden swords to terrify Napoleon's army.

Calhoun's boast, though far from justified, was not without some foundation. The good-natured forbearance of Congress and the American people gave the nullifiers whom Jackson had thrown into a cold sweat plausible reason for claiming the compromise as their own victory. Nullification, though certainly not acknowledged by our compromisers as a rightful remedy for discontented States to apply, had certainly been respected as an efficient one. The South Carolina convention met again March 11th. It repealed the ordinance of nullification, and then passed a second ordinance to nullify the force act.* As submission to the tariff made the force act harmless, this last shot was a bit of bravado like firing into the air, but it showed that South Carolina still clung to her convenient heresy. A State flag with its ground of rich green silk, bearing the coiled rattlesnake and palmetto, was presented to the militia of Charleston; while at a State-rights ball given at that city by those who had volunteered to defend South Carolina "from invaders," the stars and stripes were omitted from the decorations.† The federal troops now quietly withdrew; with dancing and military parades this bloodless imbroglio ended.

March 11.

April.

* 44 Niles, etc. Some authorities have wrongly stated that South Carolina did not repeal the nullifying ordinance.

† 44 Niles, 107; newspapers of the day.

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But ominous signs remained in the horizon. South Carolina had threatened secession, and had attempted besides to unite all slaveholders in the call for a Southern convention. "The danger is not passed; we have but checked the disease;" wrote Calhoun in an open letter.* And it was well remarked of South Carolina by one of the House debaters, who was vexed at our easy surrender of principle, that "the root of her discontent lay deeper than the tariff, and would continue when that was forgotten."†

Why a President so undaunted as Jackson yielded his assent to this hasty compact when coupled with a revenue enforcement act we have already suggested. That he disapproved this capitulation to a State in arms is well known. His wrath against Calhoun and the nullifiers, whose cunning designs he penetrated, and his enmity to Clay enforced his love of power, and beyond all his patriotism, which was always intense, in the effort to maintain the authority of this Union at all hazards. In various ways did he try while the compromise act was pending to baulk Clay's ambition to be the pacificator of the country.‡ The compromise tariff, as we shall find, proved unstable, and Clay very soon predicted to his manufacturing friends that there would be a revulsion in favor of protection before the bargain could take full effect. To the plea that this new act was in the nature of a reprieve to high-tariff men, Webster's response was manly: that if the tariff of 1832 must go down, it is because the American people will not sanction it, but what the people demand first of all is to sustain the Union and the constitution.

In fact, the triumph or half-triumph of the principles of disloyalty and dissolution was more portentous of evil to this Union than tariffs, high or low. Better had it been, in view of later events, to meet the nullifiers then and there upon their own issue, and break the stubborn pride

* Letter of March 27; newspapers of the day.

† John Davis in debate, Feb. 25, 1833.

‡ See Hugh L. White's Memoirs, 299.

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of South Carolina, than permit these heresies to be sown broadcast. Never could the country have been more favorably situated in strength and resources for such a conflict. With all the sympathy natural among Southern planters, not one Southern State was likely to join South Carolina in the pretentious right to nullify and secede. The President, himself a Southerner, but at every fibre a Union man, might have been trusted in the emergency to uphold the majesty of the laws and the rights of the people. His very name as a soldier struck terror to enemies, and made the boldest conspirator falter. That South Carolina would have yielded without bloodshed is most likely; that, madly contending, her coercion and abasement would have followed is certain. The sword of civil war is always terrible to draw; yet the worst slaughter in 1833 would have been light in comparison with that which followed the second provocation of this State less than thirty years later. But the forbearance of the stronger part of the Union equalled in these days the impatient disdain of the weaker; and temporizing remedies for relief, that mischief of all representative governments, drove the disease deeper into our system instead of eradicating it.

As for Calhoun, distrusted henceforth as a conspirator by a large fraction of his former party and by the general mass of the people, his capacious intellect and energy from henceforth belonged unreservedly to the pernicious cause of which he was now by far the ablest exponent and to the spirited State which maintained him steadily in public life. With scarcely a break in his new career, he sat in the Senate as one of its three greatest men, austere and isolated, devoted to Southern rights, and the unapproachable champion of doctrines which shook the Union to its centre. A kind master to his own slaves, he forged a chain, link by link, which should draw the whole country into the toils of slavery or break and leave slaveholders to form a new and stronger confederacy of their own. Into the mysteries of this metamorphosis he retired like a conjurer who retreats into clock-work. Chaste as snow, and in

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his private morals stronger than Clay or Webster, he was not less corroded than they by ambition. While he sat in his chair in the Senate, rarely conversing, unknown personally by many of those who saw him daily, strangers studied his remarkable face and figure. Miss Martineau wrote of him as a cast-iron man, and others who saw him have used similar expressions; for he seemed to harden into a creature of intellectual solitude, who opened his mouth, whether in the Senate or at his fireside, only to impress others with his political misconceptions while imbibing not the slightest impression in return. His intellect, which was one of the greatest this country has produced, narrowed its range for the sake of effect. Embodying thus a few startling abstractions, he became, by the force of his striking and singular personal character and the habit of constant reiteration in speech and of probing profoundly as into a well, the sage, philosopher, and dogmatist of the slaveholding section, a most fascinating political teacher of the Southern youth, and withal a dangerous one. His reserved rights of States, as he worked out the theory, served for those who were in danger of being outnumbered. Well-bred, unpretentious, and full of that simple courtesy which captivates the young, and having, moreover, an unblemished integrity, and the nicest sense of personal honor in pecuniary affairs, the influence Calhoun exerted in this later episode of his long career was immeasurably increased by the almost utter absence of public responsibility. Holding aloof from political parties as though he despised their modes, and keeping his State equally disdainful of the national patronage, he was in a fit position to take always the reform side of administrative questions and to denounce debauchery in the civil service. His bitterness for the rest of his life was to thirst for the chief office, while the tantalizing wave approached and receded constantly, but never touched his lips.

In the present escape from the meshes of tariff resistance and premature rebellion, Calhoun suffered from Clay's friends some personal humiliations which rankled in his ‘er allusions to the subject; but he schooled himself

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to think and speak with composure on all subjects, and never again to appear as an apologist. He had always been a man of cool self-confidence and audacity. His logical process and style of oratory were his own, and as unlike the eloquence of his great rivals as possible. He addressed his associates simply as "Senators," after the Roman fashion; his speech was direct, and rarely adorned with metaphor or anecdote, and, though trenchant, he rarely failed in courtesy. His long, coarse hair which stood out straight from the skull for an inch and then fell over on either side of the head grew more gray from year to year, the lines of his face more deeply marked, his luminous eyes more sunken, his thin lips more compressed, his cheeks more hollow, the lines of his face drawn out longer. The whole aspect of the great Carolinian betrayed the fires of disappointed ambition which he was resolutely quenching; but the mischief he plotted against the free States, and the integrity of that broad Union from whose confidence he could expect no more, remained his heart's close secret.*

* Little is known of Calhoun's personal relations and home life except from the fragmentary accounts of his contemporaries. His private letters were not carefully preserved, and many of his papers entrusted to others were lost during the civil war. See Von Holst's Calhoun. Some of his letters are among the Monroe MSS. Lamar's scholarly oration recently pronounced (1887) presents this great Southern statesman in the most favorable light from the stand-point of an admirer, brought up later in the same political school, who has seen these ingenious theories at last exhausted after inflicting their worst calamities. Calhoun's intellectual fibre must be recognized by all, but he mingled in events, and the text of his public speeches should be read in the light of the incidents which produced them.

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CHAPTER XIV.

SECOND ADMINISTRATION OF ANDREW JACKSON.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-THIRD CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1833—MARCH 3, 1835.

ANDREW JACKSON, when his second administration began, was distant less than a fortnight from his sixty-sixth birthday. Of earlier Presidents chosen for two terms, both Washington and Jefferson had retired from office when somewhat younger; Madison at an age equalling almost literally Jackson's present weight of years; Monroe when somewhat older, yet before he was sixty-seven. Jackson's health was already precarious; there had been days when he was so feeble that it seemed impossible he could outlive his first term; he fought infirmities constantly, and a childless yet domestic man, he mourned tenderly the spouse whose fresh grave he had left behind him at the Hermitage to go where fame awaited him.

1833. March 4.

1833.

What prompted, then, those plump majorities which bore this old man a second time into the civil chair, stronger in the popular support than before? Gratitude, chiefly, for his heroic service in the field, and that idolatry which military heroes command under every system of government. Heartier, too, was the recognition, because it had worked out slowly, and as though stifled by earlier misgivings. And what did the people expect from his second administration? A policy conservative on the whole, as before, which frowned upon monopolies and guarded the humble toiler. Our country was now prosperous, at peace with the world, free from the hard pressure of debt. Mere errors and foibles might be overlooked in a magistrate so

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popular; and supposing his grasp should relax, the smooth current would take us safely along. While that one dark cloud, nullification, mottled the landscape in the midst of the canvass, the people drew still closer to their veteran warrior by a common instinct, and their confidence was not misplaced. Clay might be called "the great pacificator," but that prouder title, "preserver of the Union," belonged to our military chieftain.

Decked with this new honor, and triumphant, as it then seemed, over the hydra whose head was cut off, Jackson entered upon a second term, old as he was, when at the zenith of his national renown and popularity. The clouds once threatening had dispersed, and all was bright sunshine again. Had our hero laid down office at this moment instead of taking the oath anew, his fame must have been irresistible, for thus far his course had on the whole been wise as well as brilliant; he had shown great sagacity, and, being uncorrupt personally, all the odium of his patronage and mischievous appointments would have rested on the shoulders of his civil advisers and parasites; so unwilling are the people to believe any ill of their hero. Except for the spoils business and a few private quarrels, he had well maintained the national dignity. Even now, as Andrew Jackson came quietly into the Representatives' hall on the 4th of March to take the customary oath for a second term, attended by the Vice-President-elect and a private secretary, and announced to the assembled dignitaries only by the applause of spectators which greeted his entrance, his modest but distinguished mien prepossessed all hearts in his favor. Both Houses of Congress received him with every token of respect. Among foreign ministers resplendent in gold lace, and officers in their uniforms, he stood contrasted in plain black suit without a single decoration; an elderly man, tall, spare and bony, and by no means robust in aspect. His dark-blue eyes peered out searchingly from beneath heavy eyebrows and a wrinkled forehead high but narrow; his firm-set mouth and chin worked almost convulsively with the play of his emotions, and his general

March 4.

features conveyed the impression of a quick and nervous energy as well as great decision of character. His thick hair, bristling stiffly up in front, was by this time perfectly white, and being brushed upward and back from the brow, gave to his long and beardless face a delicate look, almost womanly in repose, which could not be forgotten. He dressed in the plain civilian suit of the period, with watch-seal dangling from the fob, a shirt slightly ruffled, and starched collar-points standing sentinel over the chin, which rose resolute from the constraint of a stiff black stock.

In these later years Jackson often wore a pair of solemn spectacles which gave to his visage a more sage and penetrating look than ever; and when walking he would mount a light beaver hat, on which was bound his widower's weed, and carry a goodly cane adorned with a silk tassel, which he would flourish when animated like a sword to emphasize his thoughts.* That game-cock look, as some well styled it, which was Jackson's characteristic expression, was softened by the lines of advancing age. No stranger encountered his hospitality without mingling some tenderness with his admiration of the man. By dependents, by the young, by all familiars whose purpose coincided with his own instead of crossing it, Jackson was idolized. To men of cooler judgment he recalled the knight of La Mancha, though only so far as they thought to caricature the fiery zeal with which one may charge at a debatable wrong which stands in his path rather than go round; for Jackson, if a knight-errant at all in disputation, dealt at least with the realities of life and that in a method most effectual. His chivalry, too, towards the fair sex was chaste and worthy of a knight-errant of old. He impressed as one intense in his convictions rather than broad; passionate, irascible, liable to error and prejudice, vindictive even, but most courteous to meet on his own ground, and in the main true to himself, or rather to his personality for the time being, for a character so impetu-

* See portraits in Corcoran Gallery and in 3 Parton's Jackson.

ous is apt to shift its logic with its environs. Andrew Jackson was neither so ignorant nor so ill-bred as rumor and the rancor of his enemies would have made out. He had a frank and manly bearing, as of one who felt himself a distinguished personage in any society, and strangers from abroad who met him for the first time, prejudiced by all they had heard, were impressed by the courtesy of his bearing as well as his keen sagacity. On all public occasions his demeanor was admirable, showing the perfect democrat and man of the people, at ease with the world. He shook hands with all, conversed pleasantly, and appeared neither distant nor undignified. He spoke his mind on all subjects without affectation, and though the texture of expression might be rude, there was a body of thought beneath.

A conscious pride now swelled the President's breast, that of holding the rank of the first citizen in America, the twice-trusted leader of the people, the vindicator, besides, of the federal Union and national supremacy. This consciousness deepened his purpose to administer affairs rightly; but unhappily for the country, as the sequel will show, success and adulation turned his head, made him more arbitrary and unmanageable than before, less disposed to heed the promptings of public opinion, or even of his own party followers. It is his second term upon which historical censure most safely fastens. He himself had looked upon his re-election canvass as a submission of his whole executive policy; but that verdict once given in his favor, he treated it as an approval at all points of whatever he had done or might do, and launched out boldly on his new career as autocrat of the democracy or tribune of the people, defying the co-ordinate departments of government as no other President has safely dared.

And thus at twelve o'clock on Monday, March 4th, stood the venerable hero of New Orleans before a concourse in which both Houses of Congress, the cabinet, the diplomatic corps, and the army and navy were represented. Following the unbroken line of precedents since Washington's day, these second-term ex- March 4.

ercises were brief and simple. In a short address Jackson alluded to the late nullification troubles,—the topic still uppermost in the public thought,—fervently expressing the wish that this people might be preserved from all danger and continue forever "united and happy." The chief-justice, his senior in age by twelve years, then tottered to the front and administered the oath of office, which the President repeated aloud. After Van Buren, the Vice-President-elect, had been similarly sworn, the two magistrates left the applauding assembly.* This was the last inaugural scene in which Marshall bore a part, nor was American President ever again inducted for a second term while lasted that Union of social and sectional compromise for which Jackson had asked a benediction.

The regal and sumptuous adornment of the White House which scribblers for the press had carped at while the younger Adams was President went on under his successor without complaint. The great east room, which the late Executive had left bare, was since supplied with costly furniture, and at the state receptions, which the public might freely attend without invitation, a mingled throng of notables and nobodies of both sexes crushed and jostled one another, elbowing their way through the corridors and smaller parlors into this chief reservoir of entertainment, after shaking hands with the President.† Every chief Executive hitherto, except Jefferson, had brought into this mansion an accomplished wife to be the mistress of its hospitalities. Jackson, like Jefferson, was a widower, and, more than that, a childless one. The wife of his nephew and private secretary, Andrew Jackson Donelson, aided by another beautiful niece, performed with grace the easy honors of the official abode; but the era of courtly elegance was passing away; and the domestic scene in the President's parlor, where the patriarch puffed his long reed pipe in peace, while the ladies sewed and chatted by

* Newspapers of the day; 8 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 535.
† Arfwedson's Travels.

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the fire, checking the sport of their children when it became too noisy, is the more attractive one.

Flanking the grounds of the White House stood the four department buildings,—State, Treasury, War, and Navy,—all of plain brick. But the last day of March saw this ugly symmetry broken by the total destruction of the Treasury building for the second time in our history.* The fire broke out between midnight and sunrise, and a prodigious quantity of old records and vouchers for settled accounts perished in the flames.† March 31.

This first summer of Jackson's second term was signalized by an Eastern tour, such as Monroe and Washington before him had made at the official outset. Citizens of Hartford had, on the latest anniversary of New Orleans, extended him a formal invitation, to which he replied that having long desired to visit New England he hoped to do so during the year.‡ First of all, however, the President, with his suite, went down to Fredericksburg, Virginia, to lay the foundation-stone for a monument to Washington's mother, one of the pious projects of this period, upon which Plenty poured an abundance of good words but little money. The more the family stock of the immortal Virginian dwindled and died out, the more did our people yearn to make the guardianship of his remains a public trust. The recent centennial of his birth would have been splendidly celebrated had Congress been allowed its request;§ and, as events tended, nothing so much as the memory of Washington's name and example held North and South together in peaceful alliance. 1833. May.

Three important changes next occurred in Jackson's cabinet whose bearing will be found important. Edward Livingston, the Secretary of State, left the cabinet to go as minister to France. Louis McLane was advanced from the Treasury to the State department May 29.

* See vol. i, p. 480. † 44 Niles, 84. ‡ See 44 Niles, 82.
§ *Supra*, p. 102.

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to fill the vacancy. To McLane's former place succeeded William J. Duane, of Philadelphia, a distinguished lawyer and son of the Colonel Duane whose *Aurora* was once the leading Democratic press in America. The rest of the former cabinet remained unchanged.

And now began the promised tour to the East, which occupied about a month. Its chief object was recreation and applause. Early in June the President left Washington, passing through the cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, and thence into the heart of New England. He was accompanied on most of the route by Vice-President Van Buren, Cass and Woodbury, of the cabinet, and Major Donelson, his private secretary. Wherever he went were feasts and civic processions, and immense crowds, rending the sky with their hurrahs and pressing forward to shake hands with the old hero. Entering New York city under a military escort, and accompanied by the governor and civic authorities, he rode up Broadway from Castle Garden bare-headed and bowing to the cheers and waving of flags and handkerchiefs by the dense mass of spectators. In Boston he reviewed the militia on the common, and, visiting Harvard University on his departure, received the degree of Doctor of Laws, being welcomed also by Everett at Bunker Hill on the same day; and after visiting the Lowell mills, where the factory girls turned out in procession to greet him, he passed to Concord, New Hampshire, where he was received with great parade on the 28th. But here, most unexpectedly, Jackson's tour came to a sudden end; for instead of going on to Maine, according to arrangement, he quickly retraced his course through Massachusetts by private conveyance, took a steamboat at Providence for the South, and when next heard from was passing through Baltimore by night rail for the seat of government, where he arrived once more on the anniversary day of independence, having made the return journey in three days. Ill-health and fatigue were the reasons given out for this hasty curtailment of the programme. Crowds, collations, and constant exposure

June.

July 1–3.

July 4.

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taxed an old man's health severely; while in Boston he was bled for pleurisy, and his feeble state of health much disarranged the preparations for his diversion; and the farther he journeyed the weaker he seemed to become, until good physicians feared that he would never get back to Washington alive. The reasons assigned were not the only ones. There was a touch of military craft, most likely, in his malady; he was willing that others should make the most of his weak physique, and being, moreover, intent upon an astounding political move on his personal responsibility, this long pæan of peace to a conqueror whose brain was engaged in war must have grown oppressively irksome; and with the development of that plan his prompt return to the seat of war, that is to say the seat of government, became imperative.*

Familiarity and the bitterness of faction lowered the tone of this public tour as compared with former ones of the kind. The progress of Washington, Monroe, and Lafayette had elicited a venerating applause which cemented the pride and loyal feeling of American citizenship, and society all along the route put forward its natural leaders to extend the greeting which all were zealous to express. But here the note of hospitality was pitched, as it were, from the kitchen and back-alley, and arrangements fell largely into the hands of petty dignitaries, many of them rabid partisans, about whom swarmed the mosquito breed of spoil-seekers and buzzing insignificants, each striving to cut a figure on this occasion with politic ends in view. A thundering aggregate was the best part of the demonstration. Statesmen of the opposite party retreated into the background. Distinguished scholars and citizens came forward, it is true, in some places, to swell the meed of applause, but it was chiefly to show respect for the office, if not the officer. The honorary degree he received from the chief and oldest seat of learning in the land was generally looked upon by scholars as a piece of ridiculous

* See J. Q. Adams's harsh comments on Jackson's disposition to make a convenience of his debility, Diary, vol. 9.

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flattery to a man who was neither a scholar nor the patron of scholars. The blue bloods of Boston peeped from behind the curtains as his carriage went by under military escort. Various mischances occurred on his travels which enemies turned to ridicule. While the President was on his pious pilgrimage down the Potomac, a lieutenant of the navy whose name had been struck from the rolls came on board the steamboat at Alexandria and assaulted him, escaping the general's uplifted cane after slapping his face.* At the New York Battery a crowded bridge broke down just as the President's horse had passed over it, precipitating a dense mass of sycophants and spectators into the soft mud left by a receding tide, with just enough damage to make the scene laughable to those who read of it.† Other mishaps were related at the expense of members of his suite who were less bold than he in the saddle.‡ Incidents like these gave a grotesque side to the tour together with the mill-wheel roar of the populace, the hand-shakings, the Boston dysentery, the ceremonious reception at Cambridge, where an imaginary Latin response electrified the President's classical audience, which rounded off in those stirring and patriotic phrases, "*E pluribus unum; sine quâ non!*" For there was felt a delicious absurdity in casting these academic pearls before the illiterate great, and trying to keep up the academic conceit in doing so. In fact, the jocose reporter was now abroad for the first time, and there cropped out in the course of Jackson's tour a Colonel Jack Downing, whose letters pictured him travelling in the President's suite as intimate adviser and occasional proxy for pump-handle intercourse with the people. Jack Downing was the first of our newspaper humorists to sport with ephemeral events, the forerunner of Doesticks,

* See 3 Parton's Jackson, 487; 44 Niles. This ex-officer, Randolph by name, was afterwards arrested for conspiracy, but discharged on *habeas corpus*.

† 3 Parton, 489; 2 Arfwedson's Travels.

‡ See Josiah Quincy's Figures of the Past, 352, etc., describing a scene which occurred at Boston, where the non-committal Van Buren was no favorite.

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Artemas Ward, Nasby, and other spurious personages of a school now familiar enough, whose mission is to lampoon the great. But neither the virulence of our better remnant nor the buffoonery of the conservative press could cool the honest enthusiasm of the common people. Jackson appeared now in the full blaze of a warrior's glory. He had conquered nullification, or at least had conquered it so far as the national spirit of fraternity in those days permitted; for we came, we saw, we compromised. A little incident connected with his entry into Boston touched the chord which was deepest in the man and his admirers. At the city line the orator who greeted him at the triumphal arch gave this brief but hearty doggerel of his own composition:

> "And may his powerful arm long remain nerved
> Who said, 'The Union, it must be preserved!' "

"Sir," was the laconic reply of the President, in a voice equally fervent, "it shall be preserved as long as there is a nerve in this arm!"*

Other tours were made by aspirants of the other party during the present long recess. About the time Jackson visited New England, Webster, who was conveniently absent, enjoyed an ovation of his own at Pittsburg and the West. Clay made an Eastern journey in early autumn, following in the President's trail to Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, drawing great crowds to see and hear him. Black Hawk, the captured Indian chief, was taken on a northern tour this same summer, and drew crowds in many cities almost as great as the President himself.† June. October.

Tours through the Union from this date cease to be of historical consequence, nor do we find the fame of them appropriated to the chief figures in history. Among foreign visitors taking the national circuit no one 1833.

* Boston newspapers, June 1833; 2 Arfwedson's and 1 Abdy's Travels; Quincy's Figures of the Past.

† Newspapers of the day.

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is ever likely to be welcomed again like the beloved Lafayette. But statesmen, literary men, Indian warriors, candidates, athletes, celebrities of every hue and description, native or foreign, may henceforth go up and down, peddling for popularity, to be lionized by a susceptible fraction of the people. The people themselves begin to move about and see great men and places for themselves. A wonderful growth of travelling facilities, by land more particularly, marks the era now commencing and sets a white stone to the very year at which we stand. Men henceforth dwell less on the past and enjoy the present.

Steam locomotion, we have seen, was first successfully applied to water transit in 1807, and the honor of the achievement belongs to our young republic.* Next after Fulton's steamboat, which sped to Albany against the Hudson's swift current, came by 1825 Clinton's Erie canal, that marvellous work of the pickaxe and shovel,† by which the whole Empire State was grafted, as it were, upon its most populous city, so as to make one prosperous highway of commerce and settlement from the Northwestern States to the Atlantic. This splendid example of transportation enterprise stirred the whole Union to emulate, and many were the projects conceived in rival great States by those who looked upon the problem of inland traffic as already solved. Canals one after another were planned to link rivers, lakes, and the seaboard together, and for many years the solution of cheap and rapid inland transit was thought to consist in multiplying the veins and arteries in physical nature, through which water might course like blood in the human frame, or, in other words, in supplanting dry roads by liquid ones as much as possible for long distances so as to bring steamboats into the very heart of our interior country.

1807.

1825.

1825-31.

This transition from paddles and sails to steam-power had been easily made in our coastwise channels and upon the rivers most navigated. On the broad Mississippi the

* See vol. ii, p. 266.

† Vol. iii, pp. 340-350.

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ark and flatboat were long since degraded to the baser purposes of trade, while great floating palaces of 400 to 700 tons steamed proudly past such rude craft on the upward course of which the latter were incapable, each wafting its long mantle of cinders and black smoke behind, its two and even three decks crowded with human beings and all sorts of freight, its wheels lashing the river into white foam on each side, and the steam hissing high in air at every throb of the machinery. Down the river these majestic vessels kept near the middle of the stream so as to take the current; up again, they were steered near shore to avoid it; and at various landings they would stop for firewood, which flatboatmen returning from New Orleans would help load on board in part payment of their passage. A sham splendor of gilded panels concealed many dangerous defects in the construction and arrangement of these vessels; often the only outlet from the men's saloon was through a bar-room whose counter was directly over the machinery; a cooking-stove carelessly set up blackened the wood-work with its hot funnel; hole after hole was plugged up in the badly-made boilers, until they were ready to burst to pieces, inflicting some terrible disaster. The shifty, reckless management of steamboats throughout the Southwest, so scanty in skilful mechanics, was already a proverb;* of the craft built for the immense and increasing traffic upon the Mississippi and Ohio rivers much was worn out in five years, being made of green wood and hurriedly built, though often it would take less than half that time to pay from its profits the original cost of the vessel. Verily, a new era had begun. What a motley crowd was this collected in the vast vapor-propelled arks, to face in common the dangers on this

1833.

* Chevalier in 1834 wrote that a voyage on the Mississippi was more dangerous than a voyage across the Atlantic or even from Europe to China. There had been many recent accidents attended with great loss of life. The Brandywine, with over 100 passengers, was burnt near Memphis in 1832 and every soul on board perished. No careful inspection of boilers was yet enforced under federal or State law. Chevalier's Travels. And see 2 Arfwedson to the same effect.

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wide and dreary river of snags, fire, explosion: women and children of all social conditions isolated in the ladies' cabin; men at the dram counter, coming and going, to tipple into a better mutual acquaintance; tourists, wayfarers, planters, peddlers, speculators, politicians, slave-dealers, whether on business or recreation bent, bunking together in the main saloon; those more humbly quartered singing, dancing, wrestling, reading the Bible, or croning out their tales far into the night, while the pale gamblers sat with the prey in their clutches, pursuing their vampire game long after the cocks in a neighboring cage had crowed the approaching dawn. More refinement and a better regard for life and comfort marked the shorter and gayer steamboat excursions at the East, and on our American Rhine, whose Dutch legends Irving has made immortal. Through sound or river, or up the bay in various other directions, the stage journeys were already lessened and distances much abridged between the great Atlantic cities; and passengers from New York to Philadelphia were transferred to some fourteen or more coaches on passing the pier at Amboy, the tickets for the different stages, which were all properly numbered, having been handed about, and the luggage divided and chalked while the steamer was on its course.*

In various little expedients for the convenience of his patrons our carrier showed great acuteness and originality. And time being reckoned as money by all rising Americans, the canal was soon pronounced too tedious for travel. Commerce grew impatient; the new and invaluable trade of the interior increased its demands with its development. Old people and slow have recalled with a sigh those peaceful days when a family party might charter the entire cabin of an Erie canal boat, and glide at leisure on the safest voyage of its length ever projected by civilized man, eating and sleeping on board, and varying the monotony by striding the tow-path in advance of the horses, and sitting at the next lock to see the boat come up and take its new level.

* Travels of Stuart, Abdy, etc.

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The dust and jolting of the stage were avoided, though the journey should consume more time.* But the anxious business man who made one of twenty-five passengers whose majority, excluded from the red-curtained sanctuary of the fair sex, compelled to eat, dress, and sleep in an outer saloon, gave a less pleasing picture of life by such conveyance. One wearied of being drawn incessantly through tame meadow scenery by horses whose jog-trot at the end of a long rope was sobriety itself; of delays at the locks; of low bridges which passengers on the deck had to shun by lying flat at the steersman's call; of the berths which were swung at night in tiers like hanging book-shelves, for which passengers drew lots.† Railroads were soon chartered in New York State to form links in a more commodious chain between Buffalo and Albany; and travellers already shortened the canal travel by taking this new means of conveyance between Albany and Schenectady on a steep descending grade which was managed by letting down two passenger-cars by ropes, while another car, loaded with stones to counterbalance, came up on the adjoining track.‡ Had canal-boats continued much longer in fashion they would have been propelled by steam.

Hail to the glorious era which is now ushered in, of iron track and steam-locomotive, miraculous factors in accomplishing the social and inland changes of this nineteenth century. The world's railway system was 1830. inaugurated in 1830, when, in Great Britain, after stubborn obstacle and delay, the Liverpool and Manchester road, commenced in 1826, was formally opened for traffic in freight and passengers, provided with George Stephenson's improved locomotives, which were found capable of travelling at the speed, astounding for those days, of thirty miles an hour. The success of this enterprise was immediate and complete, and impelled capital to create similar lines not in Great Britain alone, but in every civilized nation on the globe's surface. As happens with most great appliances to

* See Seward's Biography, 411.

† See description of Arfwedson, Dickens, etc. ‡ Ib.

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the wants of mankind, some elements of the invention far antedated its full adaptation to general purposes, and the man of bold and successful experiment trod on the bones of unhonored prophets and luckless projectors.

1833.

Our modern railway involves two consummate practical gains in transportation by land,—a gain by diminishing friction, and a gain by applying a new motive power. For the latter and more astonishing invention the world owes its gratitude to George Stephenson, the English engineer, whose rise in life from an humble fireman in the collieries endears his example to the popular heart of all countries and times. He was a self-taught man of science and to perfect his locomotive applied his patient energy some twenty years.* Yet Stephenson had the stimulus of Fulton's steamboat; nor must Trevethick's rude contrivance of 1804 be forgotten which drew ten tons of bar-iron at five miles an hour, nor Watt's still earlier patent of 1784, nor earliest of all, our own Evans, whose predictions of the triumph of steam locomotion had sunk deeply into the American mind.† As for the gain by diminishing friction literally imported by the word "railway," that invention in the mother-country dates back at least to 1672, when coal in Northumberland and Durham was hauled by a horse from the mine to the river upon a wooden tramway furnished with flanges to keep the wheels from slipping.

Our modern railway, then, was a most precious product of mineral industry; and in the gloom and grime of a coal-pit a British mechanic was working out the next material wonder of the age, while Wellington fought the last great battle of the world where this means of locomo-

* When Stephenson first proposed to construct an engine which would go at the rate of 12 miles an hour literary England was moved to mirth. "Twelve miles an hour!" exclaimed the Quarterly Review; "As well trust one's self to be fired off on a Congreve rocket." Smiles's English Engineers, vol. iii.

† See vol. iii, p. 350; 4 Niles's Register, 111.

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tion could be ignored. Nor to trace out the experimental steps by which, in the course of a century or more, cast-iron and steel rails come to take the place of wooden beams, a wagon-train the single large wagon, while the flanges to prevent slipping are put upon the wheels instead of the track; we find already in the tracked road alone, aside from steam motive power, a rival of the canal sufficiently formidable. In this country, where the British experiment was carefully watched, we had profited by British example, for the first of American railways ministered to the mines, one for Quincy granite, the other for Mauch Chunk coal.* Of these roads, the earlier built by about a year was that at Quincy, projected in 1825 and opened in 1826, and attracting visitors from far and near, as a pair of horses drew, for a distance of five miles to the landing at Neponset River, four cars laden with fifty tons of stone hewn in blocks for the unfinished monument at Bunker's Hill.† On another coal-mine in Pennsylvania ‡ was placed by 1829, it is said, the first locomotive-engine ever seen in this country.

1825-26.

1829.

Wild was the excitement in England and the United States when the Liverpool and Manchester enterprise was established as an iron highway employing an iron horse of unparalleled speed and endurance. Men of forecast now declared that the canal must soon contract the sphere of its traffic before a means of conveyance which flood, drought, and the winter's frost could not seriously affect, which bred no diseases and which measured its distance, moreover, with at least four times the speed. It mattered not that the capital to be expended was so great, for money now was plenty and could be clubbed into any investment which promised good dividends. The years 1831–33 saw many railways in the United States pushed to completion and many new

1830.

1831-33.

* See 32 Niles's Register (1827); 7 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 322.

† Ib.

‡ At the terminus of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company at Honesdale.

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ones projected and chartered. About the time of Jackson's tour, the number of such roads in process of construction was 29, with an aggregate of seventeen hundred and fifty miles.* They were detached enterprises independently managed. Many of them took the line of familiar stage roads, sapping the little intermediate towns where travellers had formerly rested. Of these earliest American railways nearly all were located in the old Atlantic States north of the Potomac; there were none yet in the West, and of the three projected for cotton States, that from Charleston to Hamburg was the only important one. Boldest of all American railways was the Baltimore and Ohio, a stupendous undertaking for those days, organized by sons of Baltimore in 1827, and incorporated by the legislatures of three States, Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Its building commenced in 1828, and was prosecuted with great energy against the jealous competition of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, born the same day and reaching out for the same means of subsistence. At Point of Rocks, near Harper's Ferry, these twin projects collided and the railway won. The Baltimore and Ohio was the first of our inter-State railroads and the first on the face of the globe to project a continuous track of a hundred and fifty miles or more. The Boston and Albany and the New York and Erie were the next considerable enterprises of this kind. Though for long years to come one shifted from railway to stage or steamboat, and from stage or steamboat to railway again, New Yorkers talked of an iron track to St. Louis or New Orleans as their fathers had talked of a national road to the same distant points.

Various experiments were made with the steam motor on these early roads before horse-power was finally displaced. Peter Cooper and other ingenious Americans set their brains to work, but the Stephenson locomotives outstripped all others for the present emergency. In
1833. February, 1833, the Western politician who hurried to Washington to attend Old Hickory's second in-

* Arfwedson's Travels, table.

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auguration left the national road at Frederick, entered a train of six cars, filled each with sixteen persons, and was drawn by horses to Baltimore. President Jackson made some use of the railway in his tour this summer. Between New York and Philadelphia before autumn a railroad, just opened between Bordentown and Amboy, superseded the stage. Horses were at first employed; but before the end of this memorable year steam-carriages which went at the good speed of fifteen miles an hour were introduced on this and probably on our other chief lines of traffic. Stationary engines long served on steep grades like that between Albany and Schenectady; for until large tunnels were constructed, and experience showed, too, that trains might be easily propelled in the usual manner up one clear, gradual rise, inclined planes were in fashion, and long after the Alleghanies were first pierced by the iron track a passenger-car crossing the mountains was let down or drawn up over not less than ten of these surfaces.

Our first locomotives were small, and two or more would start off nearly together, each drawing its own train of cars. These primitive trains made quite a motley show this year on a November afternoon in crossing New Jersey. Behind the locomotive was a platform car, containing a row of benches on which rode some forty passengers inside an open railing; next came four or five cars of stage-coach pattern containing each three compartments, with doors of entrance on both sides, and last a high, open-railed baggage-van, in which the baggage of the whole train was heaped up and covered with an oil-cloth.* The stage-coach car with compartments was of English design, and serves England still where the social temperament is exclusive and prefers adaptation to novelty. More gregarious, and fond of change, Americans first opened communication between the compartments at the top by means of small windows, then added end doors with an aisle through the whole car, and at last abolished

1833.

* 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 29. See also 1 Seward's Life, 196; Quincy's Figures of the Past, 344.

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the phantom stage altogether for the long passenger-car whose style and type are distinctively American.

All of our early railroads were built on the gauge of the Liverpool and Manchester road, which has set the span for the world. Wooden rails were first pinned to the cross-ties, and upon these were laid the iron track,—a dangerous practice, soon abandoned, which increased the early perils of such travel. The chapter of frightful accidents began almost as soon as the steam locomotive was introduced; for in November of this very year a memorable disaster occurred by reason of a slipping wheel on a crowded Amboy train connecting for Philadelphia,

1833. Nov. 3. by which several distinguished citizens lost their lives, ex-President Adams escaping almost by a miracle.* The hand of a mangled man, who lay writhing in torture, grasped the watch by which he had been timing for his fellow-passengers the wonderful rapidity of their course,—two miles run by the iron horse in four minutes, one of the last five miles almost in a minute and a half.

More of life to be crowded into the space allotted for living, such was the expanding sentiment of our nineteenth century. In railroad-building, as in our other activities, haste and the spirit of rivalry forced the enterprise rapidly along, the first aim being, with American capitalists, to get their location, lay the tracks, and secure a lien upon the rich carrier opportunities, convenience of the public and safety being secondary. As the federal policy was now to let alone all projects for internal development, even the national road having been relinquished, railway charters were sought from State legislatures alone; and even in States the public resources aided little, for wherever a government was disposed to be generous the canal projectors had thrust the first hand into the treasury. These charters were liberal, but prudent reservations sometimes accompanied them, as in Massachusetts, where the State kept an option to buy in the franchise of such

* 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 29; 45 Niles, 179.

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roads at any future time upon moderate terms.* Wealthy and public-spirited citizens, aided perhaps by the towns to be accommodated, would subscribe the first funds, and the managers raised all they could upon mortgage bonds; there was little of that enormous outlay over preliminaries which attended the procurement of a charter from the British Parliament. Between British and American railways this difference has always existed: 1833. that in the former, capital makes a solid investment, and with double tracks and a substantial equipment the first cost of construction is very great, while in the latter, whose business is hastily begun with single tracks and as cheap an outfit as possible, credit and means are stretched to the utmost tension for occupying the ground and taking at once the traffic which will be better handled as resources increase. Such is the natural difference between an old country and a new one, between a land with a settled and conservative population, snug boundaries, and fixed centres of traffic, and one which throws out its germs of settlement over a great area and in various directions. In both England and the United States railway transportation was initiated by private companies formed on the corporate plan, and both government and private individuals stood aloof from the costly and perilous undertaking.

In 1833 scarcely 380 miles of railways were actually operated in the United States, against 72,000 in 1874.† The period covered by our present volume was for the most part unfavorable for such enterprises; nor was it until 1849 that the new system of inland carriage began that prolific career which, suspended or damaged by the civil war, leaped after 1866 to figures which dwarfed the past by comparison.‡

* In Quincy's Figures of the Past, this foresight, it is claimed, proved of great public benefit to Massachusetts.

† Poor's Manual of Railways. The projected mileage of 1883 was of course much greater. *Supra*, p. 127.

‡ That President Jackson keenly appreciated thus early some of the abuses to which powerful and encroaching railway combinations would give rise, see comments in his annual message of 1836.

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We have seen the Presidential summer procession, while in the full pomp and applause of its Eastern progress, suddenly disappear like a modern railway train darting into the tunnel under a hill and emerge far away from the scene of noisy demonstration and quite in sight of the starting-point. Rarely as inland journeys had been hitherto conducted was a public progress in time of peace followed by so speedy and subterranean a retreat. And what reasons of state, men asked, led Jackson to this truly military manœuvre? for the motive given out at head-quarters, namely, sickness, was too simple a one to satisfy. Had the rivalry of party syeophants at New Hampshire's capital led the chieftain to cut the knot of the difficulty by cutting short his tour? Or was there some other unexplained cause of the enigma? The old man, at least, kept his own counsel; but his sickness was not too serious to be easily thrown off in the quiet summer atmosphere of the Potomac; and daily after his return to the White House did he develop his plans for the most herculean feat of his life and one unparalleled in our annals for the exertion of stubborn executive strength, singly, yet successfully, against the will, active or inert, of Congress in both Houses, against the opinions of a majority of the cabinet, against the prodigious, scathing invective of American statesmen the most talented and powerful who ever united in opposition, against dread and alarm among party followers, the financial habits of our business community, the decided predisposition of our whole people. That feat was to utterly demolish the United States Bank as a national institution, and to begin the task at once by removing from its custody on his personal responsibility the public deposits. This first assault, by a stroke at once sudden and brilliant, Jackson had meditated before he began his Northern tour; he conferred secretly by mail about it while on the journey, and returning to the seat of government at the critical stage, he arranged with care the consummation of his plan, and then put it promptly in operation. That his hasty hegira from New England, if not his Boston illness, had

1833.

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some connection with the astounding plot is quite probable; and had the mine exploded prematurely, revealing his precious secret while Harvard's academic dons were initiating him as a scholar, he would have sailed most surely into the east wind of their displeasure, and received some other titles in a vernacular less flattering, and sure to be understood.*

Authorities differ as to whether the daring scheme of removing the deposits sprang up in the President's own brain or was cunningly put there by his able kitchen counsellors, Blair, Kendall, and Reuben Whitney.† These at least strongly seconded the plan. Each of the three, whether from grudge or on principle, had long hated bitterly the United States Bank, and undermined for its downfall; while Jackson, on the contrary, never gave the institution much thought until crossed casually in the autumn of 1829.‡ His wrath once kindled, however, his nature blazed with resentment, and the more courageously an offender stood his ground, the more resolved was Jackson to fight and humiliate him. Thus had it worked through Jackson's first term of office, which he took as probationary; when a candidate for re-election his opponents had dared him to veto the bill for rechartering the bank, and he did so; and now triumphantly re-elected, he felt strong enough to carry the war into Africa. The flattery and adulation of which he had a surfeit on his tour made him self-confident, quite turned his head. Like other intrepid conquerors, one field won he sought another, and having disposed of one enemy, the nullifiers, he now turned his arms swiftly against another, the monarchs of the money-market. Be Jackson's instigators who they

* See "Calm Observer" in 1845 (69 Niles 84) to the effect that Van Buren's change of views on the journey in favor of removing the deposits was the true reason why Jackson hurried back to Washington; a statement more likely to be short than quite wide of the truth.

† *Cf.* on this point Sumner's Jackson; Kendall's Autobiography, 375; Tyler's Taney; 69 Niles, 84; also recollections of Rives cited in Hudson's Journalism.

‡ See vol. iii, p. 471.

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may, history records this latter campaign as his own, and he fought it out upon his undivided responsibility and with a singleness of purpose which, but for his own indomitable will and the shelter of his amazing popularity, might have spent its efforts in vain. Though ignorant and miscalculating on so intricate a subject, he had that instinct of the situation which in the political sense is worth more than plodding wisdom. The time had come for the United States to start on a new financial path, to break the web of corporate favoritism which was becoming a corded net upon its growing shoulders; let the young federate republic value freedom of motion, and learn to manage its money affairs for itself.

Jackson was not the man to deal with abstractions; what he saw was the enemy, personified in Nicholas Biddle, and upon that enemy he moved. Biddle was of a proud and valiant stock, and we may as well assume the correctness of Jackson's premise to start with, that the Bank, under its sanguine manager, so far from accepting its late defeat as final, and preparing to wind up its affairs, now meant to push its cause more warily for the next few years, and take the first turn of the tide in its favor. How could the country go on without it? But for the President's late veto, the Bank would already have won a recharter;* and his age and feeble health were chances to consider, even should his temper prove implacable. In 1836, the Bank's last year of grace, would come another Presidential contest. For a last refuge Pennsylvania might grant a State charter, and this would serve until the people demanded, as surely they must, the re-establishment of this corporation in all its national plenitude. Biddle's story has never been told; but actions show the adoption of this line of policy, in full confidence that a national bank was indispensable to the government and the country. Not death at the worst, but only suspended animation. In pursuance of their plan, the Bank, by a secret vote of the directors, set aside an

1833.

* *Supra*, p. 68.

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indefinite fund for insidious uses and committed to a sub-directory, or rather to President Biddle himself, the astute management of their canvass. The lobbying necessities of 1832 and the attempt to defeat Jackson at the polls for his veto had loosened the first screws of prudent self-respect in this institution, and ambitious pride under adversity now drove it into that dangerous strait where wreck was imminent. For of all the establishments to which trade gives birth a bank can least afford to tamper with its own independence; its foundation is mercantile confidence, its vital principle the credit of the community, and, living as it does in a frigid atmosphere, any lapse from virtue must be covered by hypocrisy until its vaults become a whitened sepulchre.

Jackson divined the policy of the Bank, except, perhaps, the final retreat meditated into a State charter. Those keen sportsmen, Blair and Kendall, who knew how to spur on his peculiar bias, scented the game. Biddle's corporation, they told him, meant to live in spite of the veto. Instead of drawing out of politics, it was making friends right and left among Congressmen and journalists by its impure favors. Instead of contracting its loans and preparing to wind up affairs like a concern that meant to die decently, it was extending its operations as much as possible. All this meant, so they interpreted it, that the struggle for a charter would sooner or later be renewed, and they predicated the danger that Biddle would force a great panic in 1836, at the next Presidential issue, if he had not previously bought up votes enough in Congress to carry his recharter over any veto that the Executive might interpose to defeat it. There was no safety, then, as they concluded, but to take the fangs from this prostrate dragon before it could rise again and let it die of its wounds.

Scarcely had the election of 1832 been settled in Jackson's favor before his sword was unsheathed for a blow. In his opening message to Congress at the session of the Carolina troubles he advised a sale of the stock which the government held in the United

1832. December.

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States Bank, amounting to $7,000,000; he further intimated that this institution was insolvent and its deposits insecure, and in view of the current rumors asked to have its affairs investigated. But the attention of this short session was drawn to far more pressing matters of public safety, and so far as the President's fantastic humor on this question was attended to at all, Congress took sides against him. Upon a hasty investigation which the House ordered, a favorable report of the Bank's condi-
1833. tion was made and accepted, thus virtually pronouncing that the public deposits were safe. The most suspicious circumstance, namely, the delay in paying off the three per-cents,* was smoothed over in this report. Respecting the sale of the shares held by the government in this institution, a bill which Polk, of Tennesee, brought before the House for that purpose was voted down by a large majority.†

The President was in no amiable mood at this turn of things. To his mind it seemed as if the legislature were corrupted already. Wilful through success and flattery, and fixed in his new tenure of power, he resolved to have his own way in spite of everything,—to protect Congress, as the weaker vessel, against temptation. He had no confidence in that body. Legislators, he believed, were bought up, and they would continue to be bought up until Bid-

* *Supra*, p. 53. Professor Sumner (Life of Jackson, 293, etc.) goes critically over the points of investigation. Polk's minority report with its supplement of March 2, 1833, which came in too late to be studied, showed a critical condition of the Bank in its Western branches, with drawing and redrawing between them. As to the three-per-cents, the minority queried how the Bank had finally arranged the business, whether or not by a loan in Europe; but the majority took the ground that as the Bank had receded from the project, that ended investigation. The extension of the three-per-cents was a sign of distress, though not of desperation. The effect was that the Bank would take the public money appropriated to pay off the debt, while the United States remained liable on the certificates. The arrangement being published in a New York paper, Biddle repudiated the contract as being illegal under the Bank's charter, and the arrangement was not carried out.

† Debates of Congress; Cong. Docs., 1832–33; Sumner's Jackson, 293.

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dle's corruption fund oiled the wheels smoothly enough to carry his new charter through the two Houses by majorities too great to be blocked by a veto. This must not be. He, Andrew Jackson, would himself fulfil the people's wishes; and as Congress would not pass an act authorizing him to remove the public deposits, he would remove them without any act of Congress at all.

Thus did Jackson reason himself into an audacious though not wholly lawless assault, like a true knight-errant battling to save his fair lady from reproach. But never did visor close knightly head more completely to the remote consequences of his action. Moss-grown systems of finance are not to be replaced in an instant; and this new move upon the Bank must still be best explained as a political hand-to-hand fight to prevent machinations for bringing the opposition party into power. Thus, we believe, did Blair and Kendall regard it, and they felt that the old warrior was the only man who could cope with the enemy single-handed. They pressed Jackson eagerly to take the initiative in his own person and lay bare the political designs of the monopolists who, in every contest hitherto, had carried a majority in Congress. Jackson flew swiftly to the task, and indeed showed more confidence in his course than these instigators. All three agreed that the deposits should be removed. "The Bank ought to be broken," said Blair, on one occasion. "I tell you," replied the President, "the Bank is already broken; for Nick Biddle, proud and high-spirited as he is, would never have begged the extension of those three-per-cents had it been otherwise." Kendall wrote at this time for the *Globe*, under Blair's supervison, and both agreed that the only success against the Bank in 1836 lay in forcing an issue at once under a President whose invincible will would be fortified by his invincible popularity.*

The plan was kept secret until nearly the close of the summer. The ferocious assaults of the government organ

* Kendall's Autobiography, 374, etc.; Rives quoted in Hudson's Journalism, 250.

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at this time upon the credit of the Bank were not believed to have any special significance. The Bank, supposing itself solid with Congress and the people, had enlarged its discounts as opportunity offered, in pursuance of its own intention not to die without being missed. In the inner circle of the administration was uneasy whispering. The cabinet knew when Jackson set out for the East, or even earlier, that he wished to begin the fight by removing the government deposits from the Bank's custody. McLane, now transferred from the Treasury to the State department, was strenuously against the plan. Livingston and Cass disapproved also; Woodbury, though wavering, was unfavorably impressed. Outside the cabinet the faithful Lewis feared party dissensions, to which a proceeding so uncalled for would give rise; while the Vice-President, who in the end was most injured by the recoil, felt greatly disturbed in mind. Only Taney in this whole circle of official and responsible advisers surrounding the President heartily commended the plan, and we do not doubt that he commended it sincerely. Van Buren's objections being chiefly of the politic sort,—for he feared most a division in the party,—he seems to have waived them by the time he found out how popular the President was in New England; and Jackson thought it a great point gained when he had won him over.* But after all, the greatest obstacle to the plan lay in the reluctance of Duane, the new Secretary of the Treasury.† Jackson had taken him up, fancying that the son of a journalist who had sweated out his life in partisan warfare would prove, as he expressed it, "a chip of the old block." But the sons of

* See "Calm Observer" (1845); 69 Niles, 84. See also 3 Parton's Jackson.

† Some have thought Duane was selected in the hope that he would be found a subservient tool for effecting the President's design. Others deny this, and allege that the choice had no bearing upon the plan of removing the deposits, but was purposed before that plan was entertained at all. Though Duane came so recently into office, the change had been arranged at about the close of 1832. See 3 Parton's Jackson; Kendall's Autobiography.

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such politicians are often very different from their fathers, being brought up to discern that the bread is not sweet which is earned by needy toilers for public men. This Duane was devoted, first of all, to his profession, with no hankering after the crusts of office, and possessed of that thorn to promotion in times like these, political independence. He had been averse to renewing the Bank charter, a foe to all monopolies, but he was not violent nor disposed to be the tool of any man. Kendall had disliked his appointment from the first, ascribing it to McLane's influence; but as the law read, any removal of the deposits must have been made by the Secretary of the Treasury, who would have to report, when Congress met, his reasons for doing so; the first effort, therefore, was to gain his good-will to the scheme. Scarcely had Duane entered upon his official duties, when one of the kitchen oligarchy broached the plan of removing the deposits, and sounded him for an opinion;* he was found non-committal, and to the President they reported that the Secretary was not to be relied upon. Duane himself, never having dreamed that such a step would be taken without previous authority from Congress, conferred with the President on the subject, and was vexed to find him more influenced by his newspaper clique than by two-thirds of his cabinet advisers. Jackson dealt, however, with his new official as kindly as possible; and leaving soon after for New England, he sent him from Boston a written argument in favor of removal which Kendall had drawn up. On this tour confidential letters passed between Jackson and Kendall; and the latter records that he sounded Duane once more at the President's request, but all to no purpose. Next followed Jackson's hasty return from New Hampshire, imputed at the time to sickness. Sending for his stubborn Secretary he seriously remonstrated with him, at the same time secretly arranging with Taney, the Attorney-General, that the latter should take Duane's place should

June 1.

June.

July.

* Duane's Narrative.

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the latter fail for the emergency.* After bringing the business to this point, the President went down to the Rip Raps, near Fortress Monroe, to take the sea-air; here Blair was his chosen companion, while Kendall travelled north on a confidential journey to see what terms the local banks would make for receiving the public deposits in case of their transfer from the present place of custody.

The vulnerable point in this business was the want of a safer and more convenient substitute for the present depository. And in thus stealing a march upon Congress our eager Executive was compelled to act hastily and upon private and secret means of information. Jackson's correspondence with Taney shows his mind wrought up against "this monster," while unaware that he is breeding a pack of lesser monsters to supply its place; the only alternative, he writes, is State banks, "there is none other."† Cherishing the same alternative, Kendall made the best of his bank mission, but did not succeed as well as expected. The soundest and most prudent of the State banks, so far from competing, fought shy of the plan, and would have nothing to do with the public deposits under such circumstances, while crooked and unsound ones were so hungry for the spoil that they would have bribed the agent if they could. Kendall, we apprehend, had clean hands like his master; and at last he made an arrangement tolerably secure for the government with some competent banks.

Upon Kendall's report, which was received late in August or early in September, Jackson moved resolutely to the consummation of his plan. He had already asked written opinions from his cabinet upon the removal of the deposits, but except for Barry, the Postmaster-General, whose opinion carried no weight, only Taney, the Attorney-General, pronounced in favor of it. On the 10th of September he convened the cabinet, and produced, with Kendall's report, information from

July.

Sept. 10.

* See Tyler's Taney, 195, publishing contemporary letters; Duane's Narrative.

† Tyler's Taney, 195.

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government directors whom he had selected for his purpose that what looked like a corruption fund had been confided by the management to Biddle's sub-committee. With great energy he declared it his duty not to permit the public money to be used to corrupt the people; and while deprecating all discord among his advisers, he asked some day fixed for withdrawing the deposits from an agent so untrustworthy.* By this time our press teemed with rumors that the public money would be removed and that Duane intended to resign. The money-market grew feverish, and the Bank, not unaware of the situation, turned from the extension of its loans to a curtailment and contraction of its favors so as to weather the storm. Summoning his cabinet once more on the 18th of the month, Jackson read a paper prepared by Taney, but taking his own line of argument. It upheld the Executive right and duty in the premises, reiterating the charges already made against the integrity of the institution whose charter was the gift of Congress, and vindicating the President's consistency in resisting the dangerous tendencies of that establishment from the time he first entered upon his office.† It claimed confidently that the cause of recharter had been submitted to the people and decided adversely by their verdict. The President did not wish any member of his cabinet to do at his direction what his own conscience condemned or what he believed unlawful; but begging them to consider the proposed measure as his own, for which he would assume the entire responsibility, he named the first day of October next as the time proper for changing the deposits by a substitution of the State banks for the Bank of the United States. This step, he felt convinced, was necessary to preserve the morals of the people, the freedom of the press, and the purity of the elective franchise, without which the

Sept. 18.

* 3 Parton; newspapers of the day.

† In this paper it is assumed that the President's crusade against the Bank had begun from impersonal motives. This may be doubted. See vol. iii, p. 470.

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blood and treasure expended by our forefathers would have been vain and fruitless.*

Jackson's manifesto his cabinet received in silence, and without remonstrance or comment. Woodbury had already yielded to the President's wishes; as for McLane and Cass, in their first embarrassment they thought to resign, but remained upon Jackson's hearty assurance that he confided in them and would absolve them, as individuals, from all responsibility for the course he had decided to take.† But with Duane the case was far more desperate; for this was an affair of his own department, the Treasury, and, tool or free agent, this Secretary was the personage named under the law to issue the momentous order and bear the consequences. As the cabinet retired on the 18th, he approached the President and asked for the paper to read it over. It was given him. "Do I understand you, Mr. President," he then asked, "as directing me to remove the deposits?" Jackson replied that he did so desire, but only to have the deposits removed upon the chief's responsibility; adding, with great emphasis, "If you will stand by me now, this will be the happiest day of my life." For a few days Duane brooded and faltered; he had already in July given the President to understand that he would either remove the deposits in due form or resign when it came to this point; and he had so far succumbed already to authority as to issue the instructions for Kendall's mission to the State banks, and that, too, after some humiliating changes had been made in his draft by Jackson's order. But this tightening grasp of the rein, this iron domination, hardened by the stealthy interference of the back-stairs advisers, was too much for Duane's self-respect, and the blackguard attacks upon him besides were incessant in the columns of the official organ. On the 19th Jackson sent his private secretary to ask whether Duane had made up his mind, and on being asked for more time, returned word that his decision of the 18th would

Sept. 19.

* Tyler's Taney, 204; 1 Benton's View, 376; 45 Niles, 73.

† Narrative of William B. Lewis in 3 Parton's Jackson, 501.

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be published the next day in the *Globe*. Duane protested, but the announcement appeared; and now Duane angrily refused either to obey the order or resign his office. Jackson reminded him of his pledge of July, but the Secretary replied that the publication in disregard of his feelings and legal discretion absolved him from his promise. The President hotly insisted that the pledge remained in force and that the legal discretion was his own; and after fruitlessly endeavoring to soothe Duane by offering him a foreign mission,—for he felt some tender compunction for the son of his old friend,—Jackson cut the knot by dismissing him from office. This was on the 23d of September. Sept. 23. Duane submitted to the martyrdom he had invited. Taney the next day succeeded him, and on the 26th the order for removing the deposits was given by the Sept. 26. new Secretary of the Treasury, just as the President had directed.* To Taney's vacant post of Attorney-General the President soon after appointed Benjamin F. Butler, of New York, a fellow-townsman of Van Buren, who had been pupil and partner in his law-office.

This was not, as the term might indicate, a summary withdrawal, but rather an immediate cessation of public deposits at the usual counter. If so perilous a derangement, as literally to remove, was ever planned, the prudent afterthought stayed the heavier blow. Our huge custodian held on the first day of October about $9,868,000 in public and $8,009,000 in private deposits, all of which October. immense sums were payable on demand; and although the Treasury made heavy drafts from October to December on the government account, the balance was drawn out more gently in the course of business. The public deposit was reduced by more than half in two months, and less than a quarter part remained on the 1st of March following.† This moderation, such as it was, we may ascribe not a little to the sudden stress of events unlooked for; and, indeed, had not the blow fallen when the

* See Duane's Exposition; 45 Niles, 236.

† Bank Report of March, 1834; 46 Niles, 55.

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country was enjoying the highest financial prosperity, wild panic and distress might have followed the whooping assaults of the President and the President's official organ upon this chief repository of mercantile credit. Kendall had boasted exultingly that were the public moneys but suddenly withdrawn the Bank would break at once; as if the losses to private depositors, among whom were trustees for widows and orphans, the ruin of confiding stockholders, the loss of twenty million or more notes, circulating at this time as the soundest currency in the land; as if the shock and sudden paralysis at all the nerve-centres of trade would be a spectacle for any but demons to rejoice in. Fortunately the United States Bank stood firm under these staggering blows and met all its engagements. General scepticism in the President's statements was its strong resource. Apprised of the danger, its management had checked, in good season, the policy of extension so unwisely entered upon, and by a prudent husbandry of resources prepared for the impending demands. A slight run diminished its private deposits, and a sharp pressure in the money-market followed the needful reduction of its discounts and curtailment of its circulation.* For the time the Bank kept its ground and baffled its enemies; yet not without exposing to the people the giant strength which so colossal a power can wield, and confirming a jealous dread of renewing its lease of extension.

"The world is too much governed," was the motto which Blair and Kendall had coined for the *Globe;* one might suppose them to have meant that it was governed by too many. Never did official organ in this country exert such authority as that which flaunted this inscription. Its scorpion lash forced all who wished favor to bend serf-like before the great czar of the constitution for whom the knout was flourished. A narrow, intolerant, and vindictive party spirit was infused under its influence in our national politics. Viewing this removal of the deposits by itself as a public act entered upon from public motives, it

* Private deposits amounted, March 1, 1834, to $7,343,000. 46 Niles, 55.

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was a brilliant blunder, like many famous victories, so-called, in the field of battle. The real strategical advantage gained was not commensurate with the vital expenditure, though this took many years to demonstrate, while the audacious act itself won instant applause from the unthinking, as audacity always does. Let us freely grant that our warrior-magistrate believed in his heart the worst of his intemperate accusations; that his zeal to exterminate the Bank was patriotic; that he drew to himself all the functions of sovereignty while Congress was scattered, for dealing this unexpected blow so as to do his people a benefit, and not for wreaking a personal vengeance; that he honestly thought that unless he struck at once he would be borne down by the friends bought by the unrighteous mammon. Let us concede, too, against some powerful reasoning to the contrary, that the real discretion in changing the deposits at this time rested rightfully under the law in the President himself, and not in the Secretary, his appointee; for, turn them as we may, all the Executive departments are branches of one vine, and who could have blamed President Jackson for removing one Secretary and appointing another to execute his purpose, had the Bank been actually insolvent and the deposits at that moment in jeopardy? But there was in truth no real insolvency; there was no such emergency, except in heated brains, as required this rude alarm to business circles like the cry of fire and jangling of bells in a crowded auditory,—this hasty trundling of sacks of bullion from vaults thought unsafe to others certainly not less so; and after all, no one had any clear, definite idea where the public moneys should finally be kept. Unquestionably the Bank of the United States, with all its stress of bad weather and the greater danger of corrupt management to which this political warfare fast led it, was even now as safe a depository as could be found in the whole Union. It had conducted the government operations with the facility and despatch of long experience. If stockholders were in danger, its depositors at least were not. Its days, to be sure, were numbered, and Jackson

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did right in keeping to the tack of his veto message. But in a change of systems long rooted there should be tenderness in the touch, not a rude tearing away; nor could the change itself be complete until a substitute was well matured. In this, as in other instances, Jackson's intuition was right, but his course of conduct impatient and arbitrary to the last degree. With a new Congress about to assemble fresh from the people, with his veto power still in reserve, with ample means to detect and expose each crafty move of his adversary, he need not have been so jealous to guard the morals of other public men. For checking and punishing corporate misconduct the courts had full authority; could not even the courts be trusted, if truth and not calumny were to be the foundation of proceedings? The game was the President's already; the citadel must have yielded to a quiet siege, but nothing would serve him short of a great fight and a great funeral.

There is, however, another aspect to this removal already hinted at, which better justifies the astuteness of his managers, but not their sincerity; namely, as a political broadside, the first cannonade for the election campaign of 1836. From this point of view the object was not so much to place the public funds in safer custody, as to rake, cripple, and sink, by whatever means, the stately craft of the millionaires before it could spread sail again to the popular breeze. By thus dramatizing, as it were, the political struggle, and personifying the foe, they would enlist the sympathies of the multitude, and make this a fight against the money-power. Jackson liked war, for the sake of showing his prowess as a warrior. The Bank once disgorged, its corrupt and dangerous activity was denounced by the Executive more than its insecurity; still the effort was kept up to cripple its private credit and produce a run.

To the President's cabinet paper of September 18th* the Bank responded later for its own justification in a report of the directors, which, in the main, was able and dignified. Answering the President's accusa-

December.

* Globe, Sept. 23, 1833; 45 Niles, 73.

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tions point by point, the institution complained that after paying a liberal bonus under the terms of its charter to obtain the public deposits, it had been suddenly deprived of them without the slightest suspicion of insecurity. As for the charges made by Jackson's government directors, implicating the management of the concern, these were sifted down to a mere expenditure of $58,000 during the last four years, which the Bank admitted had been used in circulating printed matter "in self-defence." This ingenuous confession, even if it told the worst, lifted the curtain to political troubles and temptations among which the Bank was in danger of losing as it tossed the sheet-anchor of rectitude. Biddle, with his easy pen, pictured the Bank as an agency not for declaring dividends so much as to dispense universal benevolence. This report made insolent allusions to the government directors and to the President himself, who was styled "Andrew Jackson" throughout, with inverted commas. In short, the paper "purporting to have been read" by him at a meeting "of what is called the cabinet" was held out as though between a pair of tongs, so as facetiously to suggest that it must have been spurious. Ill rued the Bank and its friends the jesting of this day.

To the new Congress, assembling while this excitement was fresh, the Bank now looked for sympathy and redress. By this time our national capitol might be called a finished structure under the original plan. Long since had the wooden covered-way between the two wings of legislation been supplanted by the great rotunda, with its then unimposing dome, less than a hundred feet above the floor, whose echoes were like those of the whispering gallery in St. Paul's. Here might be studied, as they may to this day, the four historic paintings of Trumbull, crowded with portraits of Revolutionary sires whom all revered; but the opposite niches were not yet filled, nor were they likely to be until, after much party asperity over the Battle of New Orleans and nineteenth-century heroes, the stock subjects of colonial times were introduced, as in the stolid bas-reliefs

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of the cylindrical wall. The eastern front of the capitol was the last to be properly finished on the outside; and the usual entrance was from the west, through the iron gates at Pennsylvania Avenue and up the steps which led to the summit of the hill. On the east side grounds had been fenced off with an iron railing; but here gravel walks wound under the trees, and terrace above terrace of green grass gave an imposing effect to what was, in the main, a noble building. A delicate white marble monument, brought from the Navy-Yard, stood at this time on one of these terraces, serving, with doubtful fidelity, to commemorate British barbarity, besides the prowess of Americans for whom it was first erected.*

On the 2d of December the Capitol looked upon the White House, the White House upon the Capitol, and both as though some spectre of financial ruin lay in the field of vision. Was there anything symbolical in that ugly gap which intervened, where lay the blackened remnants of the Treasury building?† White paint upon dark freestone seemed in both buildings the emblem of firmness overlaid with spotless intentions. Over each hall of legislation the stars and stripes were flying, in token that the session had begun. And what a session was this of splendid speeches by splendid men! The House was losing its former glory, its oratory being wasted in its beautiful but ill-constructed chamber; and to lessen the reverberation, though fruitlessly, the Speaker's chair was moved for the present from its usual position to the centre of the semicircle. Eloquence had already fled across the rotunda to remain on the north side, while this larger

Dec. 2.

* This little monument, with its allegorical figures,—a funeral tribute to the American naval officers who fell in 1804 at Tripoli,—now stands in the Naval Academy grounds at Annapolis. It bears slight marks of injury, which were probably received when the British invaded Washington; and hence the inscription, "Mutilated by the British in 1814," which was afterwards effaced. Had a studied insult been really intended by our foes, it was easy to have shattered the whole pillar.

† See *supra*, p. 117.

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body was to be one rather of bustle and altercation, of parliamentary business tied up by rules and transacted in the midst of writing, talking, and moving about, while the Muse of History, from her marble car in the graceful clock which stood over the entrance, looked silently down, as though alone to record these noisy scenes with dispassion.*

From the strangers' gallery of the House, with its carpeted floor and three rows of cushioned seats, an impressive set of men was seen. Seats were arranged for two hundred and forty members, of whom two hundred and twenty-nine answered to the roll-call at noon of the first day. In the rear sat privileged persons who were allowed to occupy a slightly raised balcony among the marble columns. Of all these representatives gathered from every quarter of the Union, Ex-President John Quincy Adams was still the most illustrious. Of future Presidents might be seen James K. Polk, now the administration leader on the floor, a statesman of no brilliancy, but systematic and indefatigable; Millard Fillmore, a new man among the opposition, who had a similar talent for despatching the public business; Franklin Pierce, another novice, but a Democrat, and one who charmed Adams himself by his fine face and engaging manners. Though accident made these three pre-eminent in after-years, others of this House were not less worthy of the roll of fame,—some new members, some old. From Massachusetts came the classic Everett, the meteoric Choate, honest John Davis, and plain George N. Briggs; from Rhode Island, Burges, who mingled gall and honey in debate; from New York, Cambreling, well trained in committee work; from Pennsylvania, Horace Binney, a great light of the American bar and only a statesman for pastime; from Virginia, Archer, Stevenson, John Y. Mason, and the pallid and eccentric Wise, all bred to politics; from South Carolina an almost solid array of nullifiers, headed by McDuffie; from Georgia, the judicious Wayne; Dec. 2.

* See Arfwedson and Coke. The clock still stands in its former place, though the Representatives now occupy a newer hall.

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from Alabama, Clement C. Clay and Dixon H. Lewis, fat but not fat-witted, whose chair had to be made expressly for him; from Ohio, Thomas Corwin, the best orator in the West outside of Kentucky; from Kentucky, Richard M. Johnson, the amiable Letcher (who won his seat in a contested election), and poor Tom Marshall, eloquent but inebriate; from Tennessee, John Bell and Cave Johnson, both good legislators, and David Crockett, the bear-hunter, whose wild and whimsical type of character gave a new flavor to politics. Many members of this branch still sat with covered heads, as in the British House of Commons, though the fashion was passing out.

But in the Senate chamber, now the privileged forum for appeal to the people, sat a body of men more compactly illustrious; and happy the citizen who in these days of excited debate could gain a seat from which to survey them. Among the ablest of this body were Silas Wright, of New York, a sound financier, who resembled a plain farmer; the polite Forsyth; the coarse Grundy; and Benton, of Missouri, who was the best mouth-piece of the Executive. These were sturdy administration men. At the parting of the roads were White, of Tennessee, once Jackson's firm supporter; Tyler, of Virginia; Poindexter, of Mississippi; and William C. Preston, of South Carolina, who was a brilliant speaker and fine scholar, one of Calhoun's followers. Among the opposition were Southard, Clayton, of Delaware, and Ewing, of Ohio, men of cabinet renown in their day. Two future Presidents sat in this body, John Tyler and James Buchanan, the latter of whom took his place in the second session, while Wilkins crossed the ocean to replace him in the mission to Russia. But renowned above all others in this temple of debate were the mighty three,—Clay, Webster, and Calhoun,—each of whom in his unique and impressive style was ready to denounce the arbitrary acts of the soldier in the palace. What a contrast in these three men, and yet how consummate their several types of the orator. Clay, gracious and winning, the most popular speaker in America, with that magnetism of manner which saved him from looking

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commonplace on common occasions, and drew men to love who knew him; he who spoke for the occasion and for immediate triumph, and hence, like his fervid and ephemeral policy, has passed already into a tradition. Clay's superiority as a legislator lay in his constructive power to devise immediate measures. Webster, more profound but less flexible, graver in his general bearing, yet gifted with the grandest presence in America, moved others by the dignity and massive strength of his eloquence. His was an oratory, grounded in a more profound conception of the American sentiment, showing more mental calibre and a greater mastery of his subject, and expressed on the whole dispassionately, except in his eagle flights. It was Webster who could furnish the strongest arguments for his party cause; and his speeches live, moreover, like Burke's, for some of the choicest passages to be found in English prose; yet his cast was rather that of an intellectual advocate than a man of affairs, at the same time that he carried too much ballast to be a reformer; and his craving but sluggish ambition subserved Clay's, which was quick and vivacious. Calhoun, the most original of these three, the weird spectre of an idea, was an ally now, but an uncertain one, for Clay's fatal combination had saved without conciliating him. Over this able Senate presided Van Buren, Calhoun's supplanter, twinkling with a placid benignity; but he did not arrive until the first month was half spent. Dec. 16.

Such was the material, such the master-spirits of this new Congress, for whose morals the President was so solicitous. A legislature of more talent was never gathered in Europe or America. But for efficient action it was impotent; and a long and stormy session was wasted in splendid but futile elocution. This was the golden age of American oratory, and the great wind-sails went round, to the delight of free-born Americans. But what measures were possible? The two Houses were hopelessly cloven apart in sentiment. Clay and his allies ruled the Senate by a small but sufficient majority; but the President held

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the House obedient to his stern command, and by threats or favors the party whips kept down all mutiny. Inaction in Congress was precisely what would bring Jackson out victorious.

In the House on the opening-day Andrew Stevenson, of Virginia, was on the first ballot re-elected Speaker by a large majority; Matthew St. Clair Clarke, the faithful clerk, was displaced by Walter S. Franklin. The President's message, which was transmitted the next day, explained the removal of the deposits, as did Secretary Taney's report, not on the ground that the National Bank was unsafe, but because of its pernicious activity in politics.* What to do in this juncture had much perplexed the leaders of the opposition. The deed had been done and could not easily be undone, were it ever so culpable. Impeachment was sure to fail, and the effort to bring the President to trial would only exasperate; for his motives seemed honest enough, and he had pursued the forms of law. It was useless to order the deposits restored, unless the Bank was to be chartered anew. There was no safe course but to censure the President and reject his facile Secretary, and all this must devolve upon the Senate.

Dec. 2.

Dec. 3.

Clay undertook the task of upholding the majesty of an offended legislature. But, first of all, he had a grievance of his own to expose. His public-land bill of the previous Congress the President had blocked at the last moment. That bill embodied his pet scheme for distributing *pro rata* among the States the proceeds of the public sales. It passed the Senate in the second session by 24 to 20; the House concurred by 96 to 40, with an amendment which the Senate accepted by a vote of 23 to 5; indicating thus that two-thirds in both branches approved the bill in its final form. It reached the President at midnight of March 1, and not daring to return the bill disapproved, lest it should

1833. Jan. 25.

March 1.

* Executive Docs., Twenty-third Congress.

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pass over his veto, he quietly stifled it, having resolved to defeat the measure at all hazards.* He now sent in the bill with a message to a new Congress, alleging that he had held it back for want of time to consider it. This sort of pocket veto was something unprecedented. The friends of land distribution had shown their wrath through the press; and Clay, the author of the bill, who chafed greatly and claimed this largess as, in fact, a part of the compromise arranged with the nullifiers, now inveighed against the President's non-action as a piece of despotism which ought not to be tolerated. He even maintained that the Constitution, which gave the Executive ten days to consider all bills which reached him, had been violated by this mode of retention in insolent silence which deprived Congress of its right to review his reasons. Benton's reply was a correct one: that Congress took the risk on itself when it sent a bill to the President so near the date of dissolution as not to allow him the proper time to deliberate upon it. Indeed, the discussion served to show that the legislature was departing from its own usage of simpler days, by dallying with important measures until the very last moment; and, what was worse, the custom had lately come in of tacking all sorts of miscellaneous riders upon the tardy appropriation bills.†

March 3. December. Dec. 5.

Uncandid as may have been his explanation, Jackson's veto in this case was wisely interposed. These rank and noxious weeds, with their bold brilliancy, spring from an over-rich soil at the time when some popular excuse must be invented for keeping up the taxes. A plethoric treasury fosters many jobs of profligate distribution which end in misery. Nothing corrupts society so widely as to pamper it with the people's money, and the only gift which government can safely bestow upon the tax-payers is to forbear raising the revenue which is unnecessary.

* 1 Benton's View, 364.

† Above ninety acts had been signed on the last day of the session referred to; a mass of business thrown at once upon the President which it was almost impossible to perform. See 45 Niles, 243.

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The land-distribution bill upon which Jackson here set his foot, though passed after the elections of 1832, had been framed previously as a bid for votes. At that time the United States owned some two hundred and twenty-seven million acres or more of public land to which Indian and foreign titles had been extinguished, and almost half as many acres still subject to Indian claims. Land of the former or unincumbered description lay chiefly in Missouri, Arkansas, Florida, and Illinois, these States in order; of the incumbered land more than half was comprised in Michigan. By the close of the year 1831 the general government had paid about forty-eight million dollars in all for public lands, including the purchase of Louisiana and Florida. As proceeds of the public lands the Treasury up to October of the same year had received about $37,273,000.* Over this great residue of the national domain the several States within which the soil lay—indeed, most of the jurisdictions in the great West—were wild over a scheme for their express advantage of which Benton was the originator. It embraced two points of policy unequal in merit: (1) to throw the land open to individual settlement on the most liberal terms possible; (2) to cede to the States wherein such land lay whatever residue of national territory still remained unsold. In the former respect, the proposal was just and enlightened, resulting in benefits to the whole country; and Congress accepted it in those pre-emption and homestead acts beginning with 1830 which are now permanent in our system.† The kernel of the new idea is contained in a speech of Burke's on the British crown lands, to the effect that government gains a greater blessing in the end, through indirect accretions of revenue by giving its soil freely to individuals who will improve and make it productive, than by holding it for sale or rental; and to such an experiment we turned, after having spent fifty years in driving out squatters, compounding with the

* Secretary McLane's Report, 1832; 42 Niles, 169.

† See vol. iii, p. 191; Act May 29, 1830.

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bankrupt speculators in millions of acres, and holding an immense domain in idle trust for the bison and buffalo. But in the latter respect the West asked too much from the rest of the Union; for why should the old colonial States east of the Alleghanies whose treasure had chiefly paid the purchase-money for this great acquisition play the pelican for these new fledglings of the nest? In this light Clay's bill had some merit; for instead of quitclaiming outright to Benton's upstart States, which had all received handsome portions, it proposed to share the public-land revenue fairly among all the States as common owners of the soil. There was a bid and a counter-bid in these years; and in the end the Union settled the point by retaining control of the land revenue, as it should have done.

During the few years of national affluence, however, that this land-grabbing craze lasted, we shall see Clay and his party catering to the older States, or rather to the whole Union, while Benton was for gorging the maw of his new West, a section still liable to fitful tornadoes of sentiment. To Benton's land policy the President now fully subscribed, while Clay's followers disfavored it; and such was the fruit already of these dealings that Adams thought the Southern Democracy had bought off the zealous West from supporting internal improvements and a protective tariff by the bribe of the public lands.* At all events, the great national policy of the Republicans, that of internal improvements, once so popular, and the main reliance of Adams's administration, was prostrate in the dust. Clay himself had abandoned it; Jackson trampled it under his iron heel. Pursuant to his wishes, the once famous national road, still unfinished, was turned over to the several States through which it ran;† the stocks held by the United States in canals and turnpikes had proved no profitable investment;‡ with the new railroad enterprises government had nothing to do. Even bills for im-

* See 8 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 504 (1832).

† See vol. iii, p. 480.

‡ Act March 2, 1831.

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proving harbors and rivers not navigable Jackson met with his inexorable veto; and his earnest advice to Congress was to give up this whole unsatisfying, unconstitutional, corrupt, and wasteful policy once and forever, and, could only the constitution be amended, restrain the State legislatures besides from all such expenditure.*

The policy of collecting a surplus revenue and expending it in such improvements excited, it is true, the national glory by increasing the patronage of the government; but it tended to corrupt the elections, and where one State was benefited others might be aroused to jealousy. In all public works the proximity of benefit should be as nearly as possible the proximity of taxation, and that which citizens have to pay for is the most likely to do them good. The town or district highway tax has secured in most parts of the Union excellent roads well kept; but this great national road, which cost the Union enormously, met with so little co-operation in the Western States through which it ran that the latter would hardly charge themselves at all with keeping it in repair, much less with extending it; and when Congress proposed gathering a toll to offset the annual outlay, this the States resisted as an infringement of their sovereignty. Nothing was left but to vote more money from the treasury of the Union to put the road in good condition, and then get rid of a perpetual incubus by dividing this work among the individual States which had derived the benefit of it to do with the gift as it liked.

But to return to the removal of the deposits; for Clay's arraignment of the President for pocketing his distribution bill was but preparatory to the grand assault which should inflame the country against the Executive for his rude and tyrannous conduct. On the 10th of December, Taney's report having been assigned to a later day, Clay presented a resolution which asked the President to inform the Senate whether the

1833. Dec. 10.

* See President's Message, December, 1832.

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paper of September 18th, purporting to have been read by him to the heads of the departments, was or was not genuine. His object, he said, was to discover by whose order it was that the deposits were removed. By twenty-two to eighteen the resolution was agreed to, Duane's narrative and the Bank's jaunty manifesto having already appeared in print. The response of the President, couched in terms as haughty as any of which Clay himself was capable, declined the request of the Senate. "The Executive," he answered, "is a co-ordinate and independent branch of the government, equally with the Senate; and I have yet to learn under what constitutional authority that branch of the legislature has a right to require of me an account of any communication, either verbally or in writing, made to the heads of departments acting as a cabinet council."* Dec. 12.

Baffled at this point,—which was of little consequence, since all knew that document to be authentic and that the President had assumed the full responsibility for his order,—Clay ceased manœuvring to put his adversary upon deferential ground, and addressed himself to the main issue. And now began in earnest the war of angry invective which convulsed the politics of this country for nine years longer, irritating the passions of the people more constantly and more deeply than has any other single national issue save one. Clay through the long struggle led on the side of the Bank, with Benton on the Senate-floor for his chief antagonist, who hated that institution as the scarlet woman and mother of abominations. The Missourian had neither counselled nor expected the removal of the deposits; but the act thrilled him with delight when he heard of it, and Jackson wisely trusted him for a champion.

In the warfare of this first session information from the Treasury was called for, but instead of documents the Secretary gave an argument. Meanwhile appeared an indignant memorial from the Bank addressed to both

* Twenty-third Congress, Ex. docs.; 45 Niles, 242.

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Houses, which asked redress for what was complained of as a breach of chartered rights. To offset this
1833. December. was sent a long counter-memorial signed by government directors Gilpin, Sullivan, and McElderry, nicknamed the President's spies, which restated their
Dec. 26. charges of corrupt misconduct.* Clay now introduced resolutions in the Senate which censured the President and Secretary for removing the deposits, and
December. the debate began in earnest. There had been some preliminary skirmishing in the House, where McDuffie tried to procure instructions to the Secretary to restore the deposits to their former custody.
1834. Jan.–Feb. These discussions projected far into the new year, the excitement constantly increasing.†

This was the panic session of our annals, lasting to the
1833-34. end of June, every new subject of dispute heaping fuel upon the flames. The pressure for the time was very severe in business circles, though the peril, of course, was exaggerated; the market reeled under a staggering blow which made the more fright because no one knew why it was given nor what would come next. The United States Bank stood the shock, while, as Webster pointed out, the administration did not simply close accounts, but recklessly assailed its credit; not even the Bank of England could have endured such hostility from its government without a shiver. Jackson's friends charged this whole panic upon the Bank, which was certainly unfair. So sudden a change of relations between government, the National banks, and the pet State banks could not possibly take place without a financial anxiety and commotion, nor is such commotion ever without its irrational alarm. Many had an idea that the President was robbing the Treasury larder for his kitchen rats, or lodging the money-bags where any thief could get hold of them; if the Bank could not be trusted it did not follow that he was a fit

* 1 Benton's View; 40 Niles, 271, 277.
† Debates of Congress.

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custodian. The opposition made the most, no doubt, of the panic, but there was no denial that it existed. The Bank produced great distress by curtailing its discounts heavily between August and December to the enormous amount of some $9,697,000; but this was only an act of prudence to prepare for the blow, for it had no assurance that the government would not draw out more than that amount in October, to say nothing of a run by private depositors. It was only to blame for having enlarged its discounts in the spring before Jackson's design was known. Alarm, and not mercy, we may be sure, stayed the Treasury from pressing the Bank closer; but the sharp retrenchment which it had forced pervaded the whole fabric of trade. No one thought the President personally corrupt, but many believed him influenced by corrupt advisers; and the report that the new deposit banks had arranged with Kendall to support a treasury agent or examiner, in Whitney, the informer, made a bad impression.*

The present stress was but temporary, being largely derived from the dread of ills which did not occur. Trade was not unhealthy, nor had the government withdrawn its funds for hoarding, but to place elsewhere. It was the spasm and agony of being forced into new financial relations that produced the chief embarrassment. To take the Bank's own point of view, why, even supposing its charter would not be renewed, must it be condemned to a moribund condition for a quarter part of its permitted term? From October to March, in fact, its reduction of loans had not been by more than four million dollars as great as the reduction of its deposits.† Yet the market hardened through this whole winter. Wheat lately selling at $1.00 fell to 62½ cents. The notes of good local banks passed current at a discount from ½ to 5 per cent., other

* See 45 Niles, 272; 52 Niles, 91; Sumner's Jackson.

† Report of Bank of the United States, March 5, 1834; 46 Niles, 54. Kendall considers this report uncandid, because it did not show what reduction was made from August 1 to October 1. But this is hypercriticism.

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rates ranging as high as 10 or 12 per cent.; capital commanded loans at 3 per cent. a month; manufacturers and canal companies were forced to issue due-bills, work was stopped, wages reduced. There was real stringency and distress. State institutions were not yet strong enough to handle the public money safely: it took six months of nourishment and concession for Jackson's "pet banks," as they were soon called, to work up to the Treasury standard, and make good the vacant place of the giant custodian.

While the debate went on, committees came to Washington from all the chief centres of trade to expostulate with the President and urge him to relieve the country by placing the deposits where they were before. Mammoth petitions were circulated in hundreds of our northern and eastern towns, signed by men of every condition and pursuit, and placed before Congress. Such memorials had never been seen before; one from New York city bore 6000 names; one from Philadelphia, 10,000. In Richmond a public meeting denounced the removal of the deposits as a breach of faith, and reproached the President for dismissing Duane, appointing Taney, and "assuming full and absolute power over the public purse." Faneuil Hall spoke in the same strain; boards of trade, in Philadelphia even the local banks, asked to have the deposits restored to their former place; the Virginia legislature passed censorious resolutions against the President. Resolutions and memorials passed into both wings of Congress, some going so far as to pray that the United States Bank be rechartered. Men of all grades came into concert, jacks and masters, workingmen and employers, artisans and manufacturers, this new issue dividing the sons of toil. They would subdivide the work of these meetings by trades: the printers, the builders, the hatters, the goldsmiths, the cordwainers, each passing resolutions. Our eloquent leaders of the opposition worked up the agony of the panic to produce all the effect possible. They even caused the names of petitioners *pro* and *con* to be counted, and figured up more than 151,000 petitioners

1834. Jan.–April.

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who wished the deposits restored, as against 17,000 who were contented with the situation.

These distress petitions emanated from immense public meetings. Pressure upon Congress and the President was intended; and New York set a novel example in this respect which was imitated in other cities. The monster document when fully prepared was brought to Washington by a deputation of distinguished citizens who waited on the President with the story of their wrongs, and mingled, besides, with Congressmen of both Houses; and their report on returning home was made at a second public meeting. Kendall relates that at one stage of this crushing experiment some of Jackson's devoted friends were almost ready to desert him, feeling that they could not bear the torture longer; but party discipline and the President's unswerving example kept them united; for they were made to feel that all their hopes for preferment depended on defeating the coalition which rallied round the Bank.* Jackson, for his part, was fixed as a rock and tons of autographic entreaty could not swerve him from his purpose. In his unbending temper he would not believe that any real distress existed; it was all, he said, a game of politics; the failures now taking place were only among the stock-jobbers, brokers, and gamblers, and would to God they were all swept from the land! "We have no money here, gentlemen," he would exclaim impatiently, to the delegates who called to expostulate. "Go to the monster, go to Nick Biddle. He has all the money; he has millions of specie in his vaults lying idle; he is trying to crush the State banks and make me change my policy." Proceeding in this vehement strain, he would lay down his pipe, pacing the room and gesticulating wildly with a real or simulated passion. If one tried to put in a word to argue the point, "I know better than you," he would say, interrupting him, and then go on with his diatribe. They who entered his presence saw that he meant to keep the deposits away from the National Bank until its charter ex-

* Kendall's Autobiography, 416, 421.

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pired, and that sooner than restore the deposits to that "monster of corruption" he would undergo the torture of ten Spanish inquisitions.* Interviews like these, whose ludicrous side was not lost upon the crestfallen delegates, were gravely reported to the people and put in print; and the President, after a few vain attempts to preserve his temper and hear his doleful visitors in courteous silence, announced through the *Globe* that no more of these deputations would be received.† April.

While this immense machinery of supplication was brought to bear upon the President's nerves, the great orators of the Senate exhausted all their rhetoric to redouble its effect. Following a calmer effort from Webster, Clay appealed in one of his fervid outbursts to the Vice-President, who sat at his raised table with the eagle stretching its beak from the canopy above. March 7. Repair to the White House (the orator urged), place before the President the naked and undisguised truth, and prevail upon him to retrace his steps and abandon his fatal experiment. "Go to him and tell him the actual condition of his bleeding country. Tell him it is nearly ruined and undone by the measures which he has been induced to put in operation. Tell him that in a single city bankruptcies involving a loss of upwards of fifteen millions of dollars have occurred. Tell him of the alarming decline in the value of all property, of the depreciation of all the products of industry, of the stagnation in every branch of business, and of the close of numerous manufacturing

* See reports of Philadelphia and Baltimore delegations, 46 Niles, 8, 31; also 3 Parton's Jackson, 549, 550, giving an account of the scene with the New York delegation. These descriptions of the White House interviews all harmonize very closely.

† See 46 Niles *passim*. Kendall, who affects to believe that these reported interviews were colored so as to make the President appear absurd, admits that in the main they represented his inflexible purpose just as he declared it. Kendall, 411, etc. And he relates an incident which, if true, sufficiently repels the idea that courteous discussion or even courteous silence was possible on these occasions when the warrior's blood was up. Ib.

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establishments which a few short months ago were in active and flourishing operation." Proceeding in this strain for some moments, Clay rounded his peroration. "Entreat him," he finally added, "to pause and to reflect that there is a point beyond which human endurance cannot go; and let him not drive this brave, generous, and patriotic people to madness and despair." To this apostrophe Van Buren listened with the utmost decorum, turning full upon the orator his bland and bird-like gaze, as though not to miss a word of the message he was to repeat; then calling a senator to the chair after the speech was finished, he went down the aisle to Clay, asked him for a pinch of snuff, and having received it walked calmly away.*

In each House the majority drove to its own goal amid the tumultuous pressure. The Virginia senators divided, Tyler taking ground for restoring the deposits as the legislature bade him, while Rives resigned to escape these instructions and was succeeded by Leigh. Between Poindexter and Forsyth arose an altercation which their friends adjusted. Two speeches in the Senate of unusual interest were those of Silas Wright and of Webster in reply, the one glancing at a hard-money currency, the other insisting upon the safe and convenient currency which our Bank had furnished and which State banks were incompetent to supply. Pressing the strong points of his cause, Webster later in the session proposed to recharter the United States Bank for a brief term of six years; but in Clay's mood no such compromise could avail. Wright announced the President's inflexible purpose; and less fiery in expression than the chief debaters, Wright and Webster were the best financial minds of their respective parties.† 1834. Jan. 3–17. March.

* See 1 Benton, 420, which adds the resolve of a public meeting held in Philadelphia, where this performance was taken seriously to heart and Van Buren's errand was once more enjoined upon him. See also 46 Niles, 36.

† Debates of Congress *passim*. See 45 Niles, 400; 46 ib., 52; 4 Webster's Works, 82; 1 Curtis's Webster, 485. Webster's bill pro-

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Jackson in a wrathful message had complained that the Bank still kept the books and funds belonging to the pension agency; to which the Senate retorted that the Secretary of War had no right to remove the pension fund from its custody. The four spy directors were rejected in executive session; Jackson sent in their names again, eulogizing them for their report, and again the Senate rejected.* But the main interest centred in the action to be taken upon the deposit question. A report from the Senate committee on finance, presented by Webster, commended the adoption of Clay's second resolution, which pronounced Secretary Taney's reason for removing the deposits "unsatisfactory and insufficient."† The question being then taken upon the first of Clay's censorious resolutions, Clay himself modified it upon request so as to read "that the President, in the late Executive proceedings in relation to the public revenue, has assumed upon himself authority and power not conferred by the constitution and laws, but in derogation of both." Less specific than before, the amended resolution then passed by twenty-six to twenty; the art which elicited support betraying the weakness of the indictment. Later in the session joint resolutions offered by Clay on the same subject passed the Senate; the first, which declared the Secretary's reasons unsatisfactory and insufficient as before, being adopted June 3, by twenty-nine to ten; the second, which directed the deposits to be restored to the Bank of the United States, passing the next day by twenty-eight to sixteen.‡ This last disposal of the subject, which was a practical one, required the concurrence of the House, There, however, the majorities were reversed. By votes emphatic of disapproval the Senate joint resolutions were

1834. Feb. 4.

May 26.

Feb.–Mar.

March 28.

June 3.

June 4.

June 13.

posed that the public moneys should be deposited in the rechartered bank, subject to removal under the direction of Congress.

* 46 Niles. J. A. Bayard, the fifth director, was confirmed.

† 45 Niles, 418.

‡ Debates of Congress; 46 Niles.

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laid on the table.* The Representatives in turn by a vote of one hundred and twelve to seventy passed a bill for regulating deposits in the local banks and sent it to the Senate a few days before the final adjournment. This variance of the two branches had been proved months earlier; for, despite McDuffie's efforts, the House ways and means committee took full control of this deposit question and the Secretary's reasons for making a transfer. That committee, by Polk, its chairman, promptly reported (1) that the Bank of the United States ought not to be rechartered; (2) that the public deposits ought not to be restored; (3) that the State banks ought to continue in custody of the public moneys, subject to such further terms as Congress might see fit to impose by law. This report, sustaining as it did the President and Secretary of the Treasury at all points, gave rise to a bitter debate in which McDuffie, Adams, Choate, and others were against Polk, Cambreling, Beardsley, and Clay of Alabama. On the 4th of April a call for the previous question cut this discussion short, and the vote was taken. The first resolution was adopted by one hundred and thirty-two to eighty-two; the second, by one hundred and eighteen to one hundred and three; the third, by one hundred and seventeen to one hundred and five.† One of the minority who had stated in debate that he was a Jacksonian and a supporter of the administration, but no "collar man," the speaker called to order; "It is plain," muttered another member in an undertone, "that stray horses running about without collars are to be stopped."

June 24.

March 4.

April 4.

That resolution of Clay's, which censured the President, was not to pass unchallenged. No Executive of the United States had been thus reproved before.‡ To the

* The vote June 13, on the first of these resolutions, stood one hundred and fourteen to one hundred and one; on the second, one hundred and eighteen to ninety-six.

† Debates of Congress; 46 Niles, 24, 38, 104.

‡ Something of the kind was attempted, but unsuccessfully, in 1813, 1825, and 1826. 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, April 17, 1834.

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Senate, therefore, the only branch responsible for such comments, President Jackson sent his fiery remonstrance,
April 17. protesting that the censure of his acts was vague and that the Senate assumed unwarranted functions in pronouncing any censure at all.* Clay and Webster being absent when this document was read, Poindexter rose, and, denouncing the paper as unfit to be called an
May 7. Executive message, moved that it be not received. The motion was carried after a long debate in which the opposition leaders resumed their parts,† and all seemed bent on churning the public mind into a frenzy. But the climax of this thrilling melodrama was reserved by Benton, who on the day of adjournment gave notice that
June 30. he would propose to expunge this resolution of censure from the Senate records; which proposal he renewed from session to session, confident that the people would soon compel it to be done.‡

The triple alliance in the Senate sealed, for the present, the fate of the recent nominees to office. Jackson held back as long as possible the names of his new cabinet advisers, until Clay galled him for his delay. At last he sent them in when the session was nearly ended,—Taney for Secretary of the Treasury, and Butler for Attorney-General. Taney was already doomed by the censure pro-
June 24, 25. nounced upon him; the Senate rejected him by twenty-eight to eighteen; but Butler was confirmed on the following day. The Secretary, whose respite might have lasted until the end of the session, resigned at once, soothed at Baltimore by public honors; while the same fate that avenged the rejection of Van Buren prepared to mingle anew the bitter cup for Jackson's enemies to drink. Once more the Senate showed its

* Jackson's assumption seems a false one, that a Senate may not rightfully criticise and censure Executive conduct.

† Debates of Congress; 46 Niles, 121, 129, 138. The President sent an explanatory message. The vote against receiving stood twenty-seven to sixteen.

‡ 1 Benton, 528; Debates in Congress.

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spleen by throwing out Andrew Stevenson, who was nominated minister to England.* Stevenson's rejection was by a bare majority; for he had many friends among political opponents, and on the whole had presided with fairness and ability. Resigning his chair and Congressional honors in an impressive speech while his nomination was pending across the rotunda, Stevenson left little chance for a partisan successor; for Polk, who had worked like a beaver to have the President applauded for everything, was passed by, John Bell, his more moderate colleague, being chosen Speaker on the tenth ballot. The mission to England had remained vacant ever since Van Buren's rejection, a secretary of legation keeping charge of affairs. Jackson, tenacious as usual of his favorites, and contriving to mortify the senators who opposed them, left the place vacant for two years longer, when Stevenson was nominated again under better auspices and confirmed.

May 22–June 24.

June 2.

The course of affairs had made other high appointments needful before adjournment which the Senate treated with greater courtesy. McLane, the Secretary of State, retiring with bland regrets, but secretly distressed at the situation, John Forsyth entered the cabinet in his place; Levi Woodbury was transferred from the Navy to the Treasury after Taney's rejection, Mahlon Dickerson, of New Jersey, taking his former post. Dickerson having been just confirmed minister to Russia in place of Buchanan, who had resigned, that mission was now conferred upon William Wilkins, of Pennsylvania. All of these men were now or lately members of the Senate; and their appointments were confirmed with much unanimity.

June.

Congress rose by consent on the 30th of June. Out of the great batch of this session scarce half a dozen routine acts came from the oven before the last

June 30.

* It was charged in this case that Stevenson was promised the place in 1833, and then encouraged to return to the House and stay long enough to be chosen Speaker and arrange the committees as the President wanted them. The President in a message explained the letter on which this charge was based.

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month of the session, and most of the baking was flat and flavorless. The President dealt gently with the public business, avoiding all other issues than the main one. On almost every bill or resolve which passed one House the other would act favorably or unfavorably. But the great panic session lives in memory by its eloquence; for never was so copious a flood of tropes and invective oratory emptied to so little purpose. By the non-action of Congress the President prevailed. A few days before adjournment came the tidings that Lafayette was dead, the man of two hemispheres and the last illustrious link to the Revolution. Congress decreed funereal honors, and the hoary John Quincy Adams was chosen to deliver an oration when the next session should open.* The military honors directed by the President were like those on the decease of Washington. Over these scenes of tempestuous strife flitted the shades of past memories. The last signer of the document of Independence, Charles Carroll, had been laid to rest. The flowers were fresh on the grave of wayward John Randolph, whose death his Virginia successor rose in the House to mention and staggering back fell lifeless.† During this session died, too, the amiable Wirt, best of counsellors for bosom confidence.‡ And now, when Congress closed its doors in the midsummer heat, members departed with crape on their arms and left the two halls dressed in mourning.

1832.

1834. Feb. 11.

Of one episode in this exciting session we have deferred the mention. When the House took action on Polk's report, a fourth resolution was carried by one hundred and seventy-one to forty-two, which ordered that a committee should investigate and report upon the charges alleged against the management of the United States Bank. This proposal was readily agreed to: by foes, who hoped for some crushing revelation; by friends,

April 4.

* Joint resolutions, June 26, 1834; 46 Niles.

† See 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 91.

‡ Ib., 97, 99.

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to show that their confidence was sincere. Of smug bribery and entangling accommodation in this quarter there were constant whispers, and it was said that editors and public men not a few had been limed in Biddle's back parlor, where any one might get his paper discounted with no other security than the influence he commanded at the capital, while the ablest lawyers in Congress were retained on one pretence or another. Clay and Calhoun denied all imputations as far as they personally were concerned, but others who had been counsel for the Bank in former years were silent.* The House investigation did not accomplish much. Inquiries into their darker dealings were repelled by the Bank's managers. The select committee, consisting of seven members, which went to Philadelphia empowered to scrutinize affairs, were courteously received by the directors, and quarters at the Bank were promised them for the business which brought them. To their surprise, however, when they assembled they found the room already occupied by President Biddle and his managing board, who claimed the right of attending the investigation. The committee had intended to examine secretly the books and the under-officials of the Bank. The room was given up, and the committee next asked to have the books brought to their hotel for inspection; this the managers declined to permit, nor would they allow copies made of the books and papers, nor bring the books and testify themselves, unless the examination should be strictly confined to alleged violations of the charter. To this the committee would not consent, for a drag-net inquiry had been their purpose. Returning to Washington, the majority reported how they had been baffled, and proposed that Biddle and the other refractory managers be arrested and brought to the bar of the House for contempt. From this report a minority dissented; nor had the House the hardihood to push the game so far, and

April 22–30.

* See 1 Curtis's Webster, 494, which makes an indignant but not explicit denial of the stories which were now rife concerning the Bank's relations with the Massachusetts senator.

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with an order to print these reports the affair was dropped. But the Bank did not rest easy under a suspicion, now stronger than ever, that its transactions needed covering up. The managers were still in politics, and hunting for advantage; so to the sunnier side of Congress they turned for an inquisition more friendly. The Senate accordingly on the last day of the session instructed its committee on finance, headed by Webster, to sit in the recess and scrutinize the Bank's condition. This time our legislators were allowed to pry as much as they liked, and when the Senate met again John Tyler presented a report as rose-colored as possible, showing that the Bank had an undoubted surplus of more than four millions. But by this time the fall elections were over, and the incredulous public had given its verdict adversely to the Bank. Some points had been overlooked in this new inquiry; and impressed altogether with the idea that this was the Bank's own whitewash, people shrugged their shoulders and were more incredulous than ever.*

December.

Dec. 18.

Hard, indeed, would it have been for the best managed of fiscal institutions clothed with such imposing privileges to survive long the jealousies which it fostered, when its twenty-years' grant of existence had to depend upon a Congress and a people so variously swayed as our own. Like Gulliver among the Lilliputians, this Bank of the United States felt the darts from a host of State rivals having local privileges similar to its own and struggling to earn dividends by much the same means,—chartered concerns which it might overawe but could not crush out. These local banks had little supervision. Under the safety-fund law of New York, a mutual inspection of the banks in that State was provided, that the public might be indemnified against the failure of any one of them; but few States guarded the banking business in their confines so carefully, and mushroom charters sprang up of all kinds, some blending public and private credit, most, however,

* See 46 and 47 Niles; Docs. Twenty-third Congress.

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private only, and subserving the convenience of the little town or city where it was located, with a capital seldom rising to half a million dollars, and commonly not more than a hundred thousand. The Bank of the United States usually discounted commercial paper with two names for some short period, like two months, made advances upon public stock and other securities, and traded in the precious metals; it effected foreign and domestic exchanges besides, in these respects having powers greater than the national banks of either England or France. State banks did the same kind of business as opportunity afforded, and for private deposits the National Bank and its branches vied with the local banks.

But in the circulation of American currency was reflected the worst image of our composite system. By 1834 there were some five hundred or more local banks in the United States whose aggregate circulation was several times greater than that of the monster bank which Jackson's pack was running down; and, as clear observers noted,* the coexistence of half a thousand distinct currencies in this country was the great defect of its financial system. Here our National Bank was far less of a regulator than other such banks abroad. This mass of chaotic paper struggled for preference, the more remote country banks having rather the advantage for keeping out small notes; nor until thirty more years had swept by did the compulsion of civil war bring out a new and formidable weapon from the national armory, that of taxing State circulation out of existence, so as to occupy the whole Union with a national paper currency. Yet with every disadvantage the Bank now panting for life had furnished a perfectly sound currency for fifteen years or more, and brought local exchange down to a very moderate cost. Its superior credit, the establishment of its branches at all the great cities of the Union, the use of its notes, as the law permitted, in all payments to the government, had given to its circulation the preponderance. All this was

* See Chevalier (1835).

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soon to melt away before the breath of Jackson's displeasure; and what currency could fill the chasm it left no one was able to forecast. Derangement and distress were sure to attend each new step in an experimental process. That the local banks, mere bunches of fagots, had no cohesive power to supply such a currency, was taught by an experience of forty years. Jackson and his advisers soon felt their dilemma, and the deposits had not long been transferred when a bullion prescription was drawn up to ease the griping pains of the community. Secretary Taney first promulgated the plan officially in a letter which was sent to the ways and means com-
April 15. mittee when bank-note shaving was at its height and every State currency yielded its clip of discount to the broker. Jackson himself, in one of his grotesque interviews, had thrown out the hint in February.* The administration now undertook to introduce a metallic currency for small amounts; this was done by inducing the State banks which took the public deposits to stop issuing paper notes under five dollars, then larger ones such as ten dollars, and finally, with all the aid possible from State legislatures, to restrict bank-notes to twenty dollars and upwards. The Bank of the United States had been restrained by its charter from issuing notes of less amount than five dollars; but local banks had not been thus restrained. This notion was not bad so far as it could be carried into practice; and, though at sword's points, the two Houses of Congress joined to help the President's experiment by passing acts for regulating the coinage standard and infusing more gold and silver into the currency of the Union.† The idea of reforming our gold currency had long been entertained. Jackson took the strongest interest in the passage of these bills so as to get his shining coins into the people's pockets; and going to Tennessee in the recess he toasted gold and silver at a public dinner as "the true constitutional currency of

* See 46 Niles, 9.

† See Acts June 25 and June 28, 1834.

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the United States," which he said could protect our labor without the need of a national bank. The jingling of these new gold coins about the country, known as Benton's yellow-jackets, helped the President in the fall elections; but it was only a drop in the bucket of expedients so far as real relief was concerned. Indeed, the panic, which was due so much to a temporary tightness and fears not realized of something worse, began to mend by midsummer.

For a brief spell, in fact, the monetary situation was sound again. The National Bank had been forced in self-defence to strengthen itself. State banks, too, took due precautions to qualify themselves for receiving the public funds. But the deeper mischief of the new situation developed slowly; and as commonly happens when the money-market is deranged, the people slid into the climax quite unaware of it, mistaking the flush of fever for prosperity. Jackson's gold dollar could not crowd out the baser paper of the local banks, its nominal equivalent. When bills are redeemable at sight in specie, banks will hoard bullion to meet the demands at their counter; the community prefer paper meantime as their more convenient medium of traffic, since the sound currency of a nation is not gold, but the paper which is as good as gold. These precious mint-drops were soon carried under the vast and rising flood of pulp money. For now sprang up in the States a mania for new banks and new paper. The twenty-three pet banks with which Kendall organized the new system in 1833 were all too few to hold custody of the public moneys. Every quarter of the Union, every State, every district having party constituents to please, must run with its barrel, its pitcher, or its cup to share the Pactolian stream which spouted from the national Treasury. Great was the lobbying to procure local charters in such times; the New York legislature this spring incorporated ten new banks, besides increasing the capital of one already existing;* a movement for a

May.

* 46 Niles, 187.

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fifty-million bank in Boston was engineered by Democratic magnates in August; and this was only the beginning of a fever which made other States soon beat the ground in frenzy. The banks already admitted to Jackson's favor closed up to keep others out; but some got into the pet circle by steady pressure, others by a flying leap, while those which were kept out altogether had very little local supervision to restrain them from being as reckless as they chose.* And thus did it come about that bank loans were enormously expanded and the business of the country worked up into a fever of speculation whose crisis was reached in three years. Instead of stringency in the money-market, the evil at first apprehended, Jackson's empiricism cost the country in the end a calamitous inflation.

August.

We have found no fault with Jackson's policy of suppressing the Bank by vetoing its recharter, but with his meddlesome transfer of the deposits, and most of all because he battered away at this old temple of the faith without the least conception of what new one should be erected in its stead. Of all public questions, the financial one forbids ignorant and intemperate treatment. True enough, as the old warrior declared with emphasis, puffing clouds from his pipe, Andrew Jackson would not bow down before the golden calf; and unless idolatry spread, this mastodon of the stock exchange was doomed to take its place among fossil remains. But governments do not go on without currency, exchange, the custody of funds. What was to be the substitute? A litter of lesser monsters suckling at the breast of the government; for of the substitute which came at last he did not dream. A pugnacious statesman sees evils already existing and demolishes a system, but it is statesmanship of a rarer and finer quality which can replace a system without needless waste. Yet such is the ignorance, or at least the inertia, of average opinion upon which our leverage depends, that alternatives are ill-considered until the catastrophe comes with

* See Sumner's Jackson; 46 Niles, 188; 49 ib., 298.

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bare exposure to the elements, and hideous ruins must be cleared away. The lesson of the nautilus, who builds from chamber to chamber, is lost upon us, for we require the sign of the prophet Jonah.

To make, then, of this meaner brood sound and safe custodians of the public treasure was the President's object after taking purse and sword into his own hands. Kendall relates that Secretary Taney wished him to organize the local deposit banks; he declined, and the attempt failing to bring Whitney into one of the Washington banks for the same purpose, the pet banks, as a body, were induced to accept this latter personage to represent the Treasury in their dealings.* Whitney, there is little doubt, used his scullion patronage for partisan effect.† Taney, honest though he was, provided some of the new custodians with ammunition for a fight by transferring large drafts of the Treasury upon the Bank of the United States to be presented as the emergency might require.‡

On this deposit question the Democracy was much divided; only Jackson's firmness and popularity carried his party through the immediate crisis; and dearly did his rashness cost in the end. Tennessee was never again magnetized by its greatest son. Merchants and capitalists of the East regretted the attentions they had paid him on his visit; Harvard was ashamed of having dubbed him a doctor of laws; in Boston his figure-head on the bows of the *Constitution* was beheaded; in New York they had caricature medals struck off and circulated which were inscribed "I will take the responsibility," and showed the President sitting inside of a fence adorned with epaulettes and ass's ears and grasping bags of money. But Jackson's audacity and the gold pocket-pieces aided him still at the polls, so that ominous changes were impending in

* Kendall's Autobiography, 388.

† See 52 Niles, 91, on the investigation of 1837; Sumner's Jackson, 307.

‡ Ib.

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the national Senate, that last citadel of anxious resistance. But the spectacle of Executive defiance stirred up social lawlessness. "The natural hatred of the poor to the rich," which some of Jackson's friends had made a shibboleth of their cause, provoking in the late debate some scathing comments from Webster, gave politics a new strain. Civic riots this year were frequent. In the April elections of New York city, which lasted three days, when a mayor was chosen for the first time by the people, a cohort of petty office-holders led the Irish Democrats in a desperate struggle against the anti-Jackson committee men; bludgeons and knives were freely used; a military force had to be called to aid the mayor in keeping the peace. Stone-cutters were riotous this same year, when on a strike, and troops were kept four days under arms in Washington Square to subdue them.* Disgraceful fights occurred in Philadelphia at the October election, with incendiary fires and musketry, and about the polling-places hireling blackguards congregated to block up the passages and keep decent voters away.† Both these cities suffered from a series of senseless riots of which inoffensive blacks were the victims and those new friends of their race known as abolitionists. In the city of brotherly love three nights were given to raids upon the squalid negro quarter in the neighborhood of Shippen and Seventh streets. Thirty buildings or more were destroyed or badly damaged, two of which were churches. Windows and doors were demolished as the rioters entered a house, furniture was broken to pieces, bedding brought into the streets and ripped up with knives; and such of the frightened occupants as had not fled to the open common on the first approach of these ruffians were shamefully bruised and beaten, one poor African, who was found asleep, being hurled out of his window. In the New York riots of this summer, which were less violent, but lasted longer, the

April.

October.

August.

July.

* 2 Lamb's New York, 723.

† 46 and 47 Niles; newspapers of the day.

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homes of leading abolitionists were attacked. These mobs, among whom convicts and miscreants of the worst character figured as ringleaders, the whole posse of police could scarcely put down without the aid of the militia.* We shall presently allude to them again when treating of the abolition cause, which was now gaining headway.

Unlettered and boozy foreigners, the scum of European society, made a large fraction in the commotions we have mentioned; these election riots in particular. The peasant from the Emerald Isle, whose animosity to England could never be laid aside, repelled our old Puritan stock, for instinct made him a Roman Catholic and a Jacksonian Democrat; and a counter mob spirit broke out among the straiter sect of native Americans, crying out for home-rule and no popery. The flames which lit up Charlestown Heights, casting their reflection upon the unfinished shaft of Bunker Hill as the Ursuline convent was consumed, revealed a body of misguided men who sternly applied the torch and axe in the cause of free schools and the Protestant religion which their forefathers had founded. Within those stone walls dwelt some sixty young girls, receiving their education, and ten adults in charge of them, all under that strict seclusion favored by Romish practices, which, in a society like ours, sets wagging the scandalous tongue. Priestly fathers went in and out, an indiscreet lady superior imposed penances on the young inmates under her charge; and the story got abroad that a young teacher from Philadelphia who took the veil and then ran away had been brought back by force, immured in a cell, perhaps murdered. There was such an escape, but the woman appears to have fled while delirious from sickness, and to have returned willingly in charge of her brother. The Protestant pulpit of this hostile vicinity made inflammatory comments, incendiary handbills were posted about Charlestown, and at midnight a band of rioters in masks and fantastic dresses collected at the convent grounds, surrounded by a crowd

August 12.

* 46 Niles; newspapers of the day.

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of sympathizing spectators. The inmates, all females, having been given a brief time to escape, one of whom, the unconscious cause, lay in a fever, the mob forced the convent gate, broke into the building, ransacked it from bottom to top, and out of the heaped-up furniture, books, curtains, and religious vestments made soon a bonfire. The cross was wrenched from its place and cast into the flames; the bishop's library fed the furious conflagration. This scene the selectmen of Charlestown witnessed; firemen who arrived with their engines were driven off; and when daylight dawned only the charred walls of the prison-like structure remained,—ruins which for many years looked from these heights across the river to Boston and the state-house dome in mute appeal for indemnity. Bostonians, indeed, like Harrison Gray Otis and Josiah Quincy, denounced the outrage at Faneuil Hall, and a committee of investigation, at their instance, reported the facts inculpating the mob. But orthodox feeling was the other way. No legislature would grant indemnity. A mysterious influence baffled the prosecution of the ringleaders, all of whom were acquitted but one poor youth, to whom the governor of the State granted a pardon. As for the selectmen of Charlestown, who were blamed for their inertness, their plain dislike of the persons who claimed protection had made it doubly difficult to preserve the peace for peace's sake.* This was not the only anti-Irish and anti-Catholic disturbance. The Roman Church was spreading in the United States, and sectarian clergy urged their flocks not to permit nunneries,

* See 46 Niles, 436; 47 ib., 92; Chevalier's Travels, 457; local newspapers. It was shown in evidence at one of these trials, by the lady superior's own admissions, that a selectman of Charlestown to whom she would give no satisfaction said he was afraid the convent would be burned; to which she responded that the bishop could influence 10,000 Irishmen to tear down the houses of those who did so. A woman who had for three years circulated stories about the institution published a book, "Six Months in a Convent," which sold 5000 copies at once and made a great sensation. See the inflammatory card from the lady superior in 48 Niles, 59, 78.

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the Jesuit order, nor the bloody inquisition to be established on American soil. Protestant associations discussed whether the papal establishment was compatible with civil liberty; and at a large meeting of this kind held in New York, while the excitement was high, the doors were burst open by an Irish mob and the meeting dispersed.* The Bunker Hill populace in their turn celebrated the anniversary of the convent's destruction by arranging a shooting-match with the lady superior's effigy for a target; which latter indecency the selectmen managed to suppress, but not the celebration.† 1835. March. August.

Not many months passed of this angry turbulence, the sign of a political upheaval, before an attempt was made on the President's life. While passing out at the eastern front of the capitol from the Representatives' hall one winter's day with the funeral procession which attended the remains of a deceased member of the House,‡ Jackson was twice shot at by a young stranger who stepped from the crowd with two pistols concealed under his cloak and stood within eight feet of him. Fortunately, both pistols missed fire, the would-be assassin was knocked down and secured, and on examination he proved to be a man of English birth, Lawrence by name, who had been lately thrown out of employment as a house-painter, and in his morbid and depressed condition of mind fastened upon the President as the author of his woes. Prosecution ended in an acquittal, and he was put into an asylum. As yet the President of a free people was thought proof against assassination, a theory twice refuted in the next fifty years by the bullets of insignificant men whose sense of the wishes of their fellow-citizens 1835. Jan. 30.

* 48 Niles.

† Chevalier's Travels. Sensitive presses of the Protestant faith pointed out to their readers that with 20 colleges for males, 60 for females, and 17 convents already established in the United States by the Roman Catholics, more than 600 missionaries of that denomination had arrived in less than six months. See 48 Niles, 59.

‡ Warren R. Davis, of South Carolina.

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was perverted. Jackson's lucky escape neither cowed nor turned him; he went on exalting friends and putting down enemies as before; and after recovering from an absurd suspicion that one of the senators opposed to his policy had instigated this assault he thought of it no more.*

Congress had convened again on the first of December. Changes, present or prospective, were visible. Opposed by the legislature of his State, Sprague, of Maine, one of Clay's followers, retired from the Senate, after the Virginian example, and this neutralized the departure of Rives. In these times the right of a legislature to instruct its senators in Congress was warmly discussed. James Buchanan, lately chosen to fill the place of Wilkins, expressed the meekest deference to the Pennsylvania body which had chosen him. But even supposing that a statesman must have rubber opinions instead of aiding affairs by his honest and intelligent conviction, does a legislature necessarily express the deliberate opinion which the people of a State entertain of their other agents? Georgia sent, besides, a senator to succeed Forsyth; accidental vacancies brought other men from Maryland, Missouri, and Louisiana; none of these adding, however, to the fame of the Senate. In the House, McDuffie, the nullifier, was heard no more; he had left the capital sick and disheartened before the first session was over, and now he was South Carolina's governor. Another brilliant orator of the House, Choate, had resigned; and the eloquent Everett was scarcely persuaded to return and serve out his term. John Davis, the new governor of Massachusetts, changed places with Levi Lincoln, his predecessor. The

1834-35.

* See 1 Benton's View, 521; 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 230; 3 Parton, 580. Benton inaccurately states that Lawrence was never brought to trial. He was tried April, 1835, in the circuit court, but his conduct at the trial showed plainly that he was insane, and the jury brought him in "not guilty;" after which the court remanded the prisoner until arrangements were made to keep him from doing mischief. 48 Niles, 119.

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fair-minded Wayne, of Georgia, took his place on the Supreme Bench in the course of this session, Judge Johnson, of South Carolina, having deceased. Stevenson, the late Speaker of the House, had left Congressional life forever; and with various other changes induced in the delegations of eight States by death, transfer, or voluntary retirement, the House, like the Senate, seemed to be reorganizing as armies do after some decisive engagement with a long list of casualties. In the Senate, Poindexter having been chosen president *pro tem.* as an affront to Jackson, Van Buren kept his chair throughout the session.

That hot battle of the panic was followed by repose. Andrew Jackson had carried his point with the deposits, and the fall elections on the whole sustained him. The attempt to break him with the people had failed. The leaders of the opposition were not disposed to reopen the fight. The routine work of legislation went on leisurely, as though to respect the disconcert of the two Houses, and, in consequence, much business failed for want of joint action. Among the measures lost were bills for regulating the tenure of office and the custody of public moneys. An appropriation for a minister to England was lost by disagreement, because the President had sent no name to the Senate since Stevenson's. The general appropriation bill went through loaded like an ambulance with measures that were picked up wounded by the wayside. On the last day the Vice-President left the chair of the Senate, and John Tyler was chosen President *pro tem.* on the fourth ballot, a fleeting compliment, like that paid Poindexter, to reward a Southern Democrat who dared differ with the chief. This choice was ominous of events; for Tyler's new profession—justice to the Bank, but opposition to its recharter—was cut too close to suit the sentiment at home. In less than two years proud Virginia was on the Jackson tack once more, her legislature reversing those instructions of 1834 which forced Rives to retire in favor of Leigh. Could these new instructions be disobeyed? Tyler sent in his resignation, but Leigh clung to his seat till his term expired. The latter was never re-

1835. March 3.

1835–37.

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called to public station, while the former tricked his beams and flamed in the forehead of a new political sky, rising to influence not as a leader of thought, but because he had endured Jackson's displeasure, because he was Clay's friend, and because he had treated Biddle and the Bank like a gentleman. Poindexter, of Mississippi, was a Democrat whose independence cost him far more heavily: for the rest of his life he was almost an outcast from the State which, in a sense, he had founded; and upon him was fastened the outrageous scandal of instigating the attempt upon the President's life. Poindexter wrote to the President when that story was started, and receiving no reply, asked the Senate to order an investigation, which was done, and his innocence was vindicated in that body by a unanimous vote.*

While the voluminous report to the Senate from Tyler's committee advertised the honor and stability of the National Bank, Jackson trampled on the prostrate body of that institution. A fresh grievance he now found in the open seizure, or rather sequestration, of dividends on the public stock to cover the damages sustained upon a protested French bill which our Treasury had drawn.† The "needless distresses" it had brought on the country, its "corrupt and partisan loans," its "wanton tyranny," its "high-handed career," were all descanted upon in the President's opening message of this session. Such a bank, argued this fervid document, was not only mischievous but needless, for State banks were fully adequate to our fiscal operations. Jackson asked authority to sell the public stock owned in the present concern, but Congress was in no humor to grant it.

1834-35.

This message contained one piece of news which carried great joy to the country. Our national debt was paid off; and on New Year's day, 1835, an incumbrance

* 9 J. Q. Adams's Memoirs, 230.

† President's Message, December 1, 1834. That there were two sides to this story, see the course of litigation cited in Sumner's Jackson, 295.

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upon the American people which amounted in 1793 to $80,352,000, and in 1816 to more than $127,000,000, stood discharged. An unparalleled feat was this 1834-35. in the history of the modern world. Jefferson had nearly achieved it, when foreign troubles shivered his reckonings; and the glory now was Jackson's. On the next anniversary of New Orleans the battle and the extinction of the public debt were coupled in one celebration at 1835. Jan. 8. the capital by the President's friends. Simplicity still, and rigid economy in affairs, was Jackson's prudent counsel, but events did not shape in any such direction. Men husband best their energies when forced to be frugal; and this rare apparition on earth, a nation free from debt, soon vanished like a dream of delight.

There stood one man in Congress, alone and unapproachable in sturdy independence, to whom this toasting and adulation of Jackson as the deliverer of the people was bitter gall. He was Jackson's predecessor in office, John Quincy Adams. The praise of extinguishing our national debt belonged to no one President. A long line of prudent administrators whose policy had tended to the same end preceded the hero of New Orleans. They, like Jackson, had steadily reduced the war debt in time of peace. But by vetoing bills for internal improvements Jackson had reached the goal a few years earlier than Adams would have done, and plucked the laurel from his own successor. Bills of this Congress which relinquished the national road after a final outlay* gave the quietus 1834-35. to that once favored policy on which John Quincy Adams had staked his whole Presidency. Gloomily did he now confess to himself that his long cherished system, that of internal improvements under national patronage, had utterly failed: "systematically renounced and denounced by this administration," as he wrote in his diary, "it has been undisguisedly abandoned by Clay, inglori-

* Acts June 24, 1834, and March 3, 1835; *supra*, p. 155.

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ously deserted by Calhoun, and silently given up by Webster.*

But Adams, though humiliated, had his triumph of another kind, for a field of renown greater than he had yet occupied was now before him. As a fearless debater and legislator he had been gaining in influence every year. When this session opened he was the eulogist of Lafayette by common consent before the assembled Congress. At its close a fiery speech he made in the House stamped him as the most eloquent and impressive leader of the popular branch. An imbroglio with France had arisen because that nation had failed to pay the spoliation indemnity promised under the treaty of 1831. Our people had become greatly excited on this subject. The President's language on this delinquency, trenchant and severe, in his opening message, raised a storm in the French chambers, and by February it looked as if France meant to fight for the dignity of dishonoring her solemn engagements. When the news reached Washington, in February, that Serrurier,

1835. Feb. 20. the French minister at Washington, had been recalled, and that Livingston, our representative at the court of Paris, had been offered his passport, Adams's blood was stirred by the insult. Our government ought not to temporize, but stand firm on an issue where it was so clearly in the right; and more than this, the tone of Congress ought to brace up the administration. So thinking, he startled the House from its lair by offering bolder resolutions on that subject than its committee had dared present. Cambreling, the new chairman of foreign affairs since Wayne's retirement, opposed him; but Adams pressed his own resolutions to a vote, and in a vigorous speech, which surprised friends and foes, roused the House to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. The treaty of 1831

March 2. shall be maintained and its execution insisted upon: this was the substance of his resolutions; they were carried by a unanimous vote, and when the vote was announced the walls of the chamber shook with the

* 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 162.

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spontaneous applause which burst from floor and galleries. It was at midnight on March 2 when this last stirring scene of the session was witnessed.*

Adams's speech on this occasion had been a trumpet call. As a speaker, he had not the grace of a melodious voice or an engaging manner. There was something rasping and jarring in his delivery, and when the old man undertook to make himself heard, as he sometimes did, above the din and confusion he helped most to create, his voice, though apt to break, would pierce the remotest corner of this ill-constructed chamber like the high notes of a fife. If his manner in speaking was harsh and unsympathetic, his matter when in debate was still more so. He indulged in the bitterest personalities, sarcasm, and cutting invective, exposed motives and imputed usually the most unfavorable, as his memoirs show, and in his whole course of action appeared very lightly bound to the current opinion of his time. He conciliated neither parties nor party idols. But in his courageous independence and fixedness of purpose lay the secret of his latest influence, which widened rapidly now that the rivalry of personal ambition was eliminated; for there was a sort of stubborn integrity about him, a passionate patriotism. His keen insight, too, and profound conception of coming dangers, made his guidance more powerful with his fellow-citizens than they were aware. Athletic in his studies, he dived into the depths of the subject which interested himself and the public and brought up facts and motives. With family traditions and an experience in public affairs reaching back to the sources of our government, with systematic habits of which the younger statesman might despair who was unwilling to give up the pleasures of social intercourse, Adams in his old age knew more of his country's history than any other American living. Reading and experience made him full, journalizing made him exact. Adams's personal appearance was as we have elsewhere described it, save for the encroachment of old age, which

* See 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, February; 48 Niles.

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furrowed the face and silvered the scanty hair; his countenance was sober and morose almost to sorrow; his dress, unstudied and not seldom careless, betrayed a frugal and unsocial disposition; his coldness and self-absorption repelled from personal contact many who admired him at a distance. While most other public men of the day made an art of attracting acquaintance, he kept up, more, perhaps, than he was conscious of it, those invisible barriers of family and classic pride which make common men feel their inferiority. Such a man could not inspire affection coequally with respect. It was the force of his splendid example, as a Cato among degenerate men, that drew the younger, from shame or admiration, to the side of this solitary sire; combatant as he was, in debate so bitter, of such egotism in his independence, that the House listened to him with alternate good-will and anger. But this fighting man of infirm temper could always command an audience. His clock-like constancy made all insensibly lean on him. First, or nearly first, on the roll-call for some fifteen years, his unflinching vote instructed the doubtful. Sitting attentively in that familiar seat on the left of the Speaker which all strangers entering the chamber first gazed at, the illustrious ex-President grew more and more to be the monumental figure in this changing body. His seat he never changed, nor was he absent from his post of duty during the long season of his healthful old age. "It would scarcely surprise me more," was the felicitous phrase of Everett, who now sat by him for the last time, "to miss one of the marble columns of the hall from its pedestal than to see his chair empty when the House was in session." Impetuous in his leadership when under excitement, Adams studied his own defects and tried to be temperate as well as bold.

On this French question, as in some earlier ones of Jackson's term, Adams stood very near the President's ground. His Congressional career, indeed, began with self-direction, the more since he was out of humor with all parties and all leaders of the time. The vaulting Clay, he thought, had slighted him, and instead of speeding his hopes in

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1831, he had embraced with zeal the Anti-Mason cause. His other late confidant, Richard Rush, disappointed him because he would not stand as the Anti-Mason candidate for the Presidency; and when Rush, later still, defended Jackson's course with the Bank and the deposits and accepted favors from that dynasty, Adams turned from him with loathing. Webster, whose silent conservatism baffled him in Massachusetts, he came to hate as a man of "giant intellect and rotten heart." With Calhoun, as well as Jackson, he had long ago parted friendship. Jackson's friends treated him, however, with marked courtesy when he entered Congress, and probably with the sanction of the President. Richard M. Johnson made overtures for a reconciliation, but it was all to no purpose. A rural constituency, independent like himself, returned Adams faithfully to the House as long as he lived; and his natural affinity brought him soon into the new opposition party, dear to Massachusetts, which Clay and Webster were now welding together from the shattered fragments of Anti-Masonry, Republicanism, and the Anti-Jackson Democracy. Of Biddle Adams was a personal friend, and he took his part in the strife over the deposits, first having sold out whatever stock he owned in the Bank so as to divest himself of all bias.* On this French question, however, he parted with the Senate leaders, yet with no cordiality towards the administration; for against Polk he had but lately flung that stinging couplet from Shakespeare which implied that while Jackson ruled the knee must crook, and thrift followed fawning.†

1832.

1835.

The greatest of ambitious minds will not apprehend readily the sphere of influence which Providence has assigned it. This triumph on the floor with which Adams's more striking career now opens brought him a pique which he took to heart. His present aspiration was to enter the Senate, but the struggle of candidates being close in the Massachusetts legislature, a report of his speech, which

* See 8 and 9 Adams's Diary *passim*.

† Debates March 17, 1834; 9 Adams's Diary.

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was somewhat colored, turned the scales against him, and John Davis, the governor, a careful man to train with a party, was chosen as Webster's safer colleague. Had Adams transferred his seat to the other wing, his fame would have been eclipsed; but remaining, as before, a sage among commoners less illustrious than the Senate, closer to the people, more turbulent and more impressionable, his figure stands vividly out on imperishable canvas.

Section II.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-FOURTH CONGRESS.

March 4, 1835—March 3, 1837.

In the course of six years our soldier-President had already appointed eighteen new cabinet officers: to wit, four Secretaries of State, five Secretaries of the Treasury, two Secretaries of War, three Secretaries of the Navy, three Attorneys-General, and one Postmaster-General,—a rotation of advisers quite without precedent, and to the generation just passing off most astonishing. With the same list of places to fill, Monroe had in eight years chosen scarcely half that number; Adams, the younger, during one term, but four, for he kept half of Monroe's cabinet in office. Jackson, surely, was little influenced by his official advisers. A nineteenth change, and the only one of them due to maladministration, was the last but one in the catalogue; and it was made in an office which until 1829 had been managed on strict business principles, not ranking with the cabinet at all. Congressional censure and the clamor outside forced in some sense this change; and soon after Congress had dispersed the remedy was applied, but with that tender regard which Jackson cherished for his faithful henchmen. Barry, the Postmaster-General, was succeeded in office by Amos Kendall, and went to Europe on a pleasure tour as minister to Spain, dying, however, on his way thither. A new man now entered the upper circle of the administration, who, above

May 1.

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all others, deserved the name of Presidential adviser, a function he had really fulfilled while serving for five years in the humbler post of fourth auditor, and writing stinging leaders for the *Globe*, to help work off the debts he owed when he first came to Washington in search of office.* He it was who discovered the peculations of the auditor preceding him, and gave Jackson the sweetest morsel of revenge upon his enemies; his influence over the President rapidly grew with his fame, as a writer of public documents in impressive style, a logical reasoner who could grapple with dates and figures, a skilful advocate and defender of party measures, a keen and crafty manager of politics, and a man of untiring industry and capacity for work; all of which endowments, and his partisan temper besides, he knew how to blend with the mind of his great patron so neatly that no anatomy could show the world where their two skulls came apart. Being a sort of twilight personage, never seen but always felt, many who cannot appreciate the vigor of an unlettered warrior have believed Kendall to be the Atlas who bore this administration upon his shoulders and gave it such unparalleled success; but Blair and Rives, of the *Globe*, quite competent to testify on that point, deny the truth of this. What Jackson resolved upon, however, Kendall elaborated, and Kendall and Blair upheld; and if not originating, this inspired tutor was consulted in advance on every great measure. His enemies allege that he was, like Swift, the greatest libeller of his day, stony in heart, vindictive in temper; but his intimates credit him with generosity, a blameless private life, and convictions the most exalted on public issues; and of his unwavering fidelity to the Jackson cause, and personal admiration for his chieftain, the proof is ample. Kendall was, in truth, an admirable right-hand man or grand vizier for such a leader; for leader he could not be himself, being unsocial as a bat, one of those who may be said literally to enjoy ill-health,—a puny, sickly-looking man, with a weak voice,

* See vol. iii, p. 495. Digitized by Google

a wheezing cough, narrow and stooping shoulders, a sallow complexion, silvery hair in his prime, slovenly dress, and a seedy appearance generally; a nobody, like Ulysses to the Cyclops, or, as some would call him, only a remote circumstance. But a good Baptist and a Bible-class teacher, intolerant in his political creed and narrow as a lane, Kendall felt strong impulses to the higher life, and after he became rich dispensed benevolence on a great scale. His avenue to wealth started from the unusual point of an office-holder's salary, upon which he began economizing the moment he received his commission. Promotions in public station opened later rewards in a private one, and in spite of scandals fomented during the Bank struggle, he seems to have been scrupulously honest in his official dealings.

Barry's management of the post-office had long made the President anxious. That department had not been transformed into a fountain of patronage without heavy cost to the public. As ready a dispenser of Presidential favors and high executioner as could be wished, Barry had in all other respects conducted himself with canine fidelity; but while doing so he had sunk into a political cipher, and proved himself, if not personally corrupt, of that type of public servant which breeds corruption,—an amiable man, with no force of will or business habits. The post-office suffered from an eruption of ringworms, of mail contractors and straw-bidders, who corrupted the employés of the government by a system of bribes and favors. By 1834 the department had been recklessly plunged in debt, and its interest-bearing acceptances were afloat in the market, a situation which the Senate rebuked by a unanimous vote. Two committees of Congress investigated this state of affairs, which Jackson's friends had little heart to defend. Barry, therefore, gently transferred, Amos Kendall now remedied these dishonest abuses with a strong hand; he simplified the inaccurate system under which the accounts of 13,000 post-offices were kept, freed the department from debt in a single year, and, though making some bitter enemies among the mail contractors, put the establishment

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once more upon a fair business footing, increasing at the same time its accommodations to the public as railway facilities were multiplied. In 1840, when he left public office, his pretensions as statesman and administrator were well established, and his talents brought him a splendid private employment for the rest of his life.*

The political elements of the country, too long hindered in course by their triple division, now turned slowly into the channel-bed of two distinct national parties. Jackson was the personage that divided them. Against the rock of his popularity these opposition streams had dashed in vain. It was now time to unite and flow onward; and this high-handed transfer of the public deposits and Executive war upon the Bank, a policy which divided Jacksonians themselves, gave the pregnant opportunity. Events still earlier had tended to this confluence,—the national election in 1833, which tolled the knell of the Republican and Anti-Mason parties, and the troubles in South Carolina, which had not been pacified without making the President offensive to the State-rights dogmatizers of Virginia and the cotton States. Too often had Republicans and Anti-Masons been opposed ever to unite under one or the other standard, nor could Clay's grand old party survive longer the memory of its repeated defeats and schemes of policy abandoned. But now, with the tariff taken out of politics by the compromise of 1833, internal improvements a corpse, the present National Bank under sentence of death, and no sharp issue left to distract them, well might the foes of this administration shuffle off the coil of old principles and raise together a new party; protesting, embarrassing all they could the men in power, but postponing their own financial and other plans until these could be concerted at better leisure. 1834–35.

Names are things in politics; the title of a party is its talisman to conjure with, while the real or pretended lineage

* See Kendall's Autobiography; 46 and 47 Niles; Hudson's Journalism, 245.

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which it boasts of kindles the popular imagination. This "Republican" party, offspring of the great Jefferson, who had given that moderate name as the one to conquer by, now dissolves, and another comes forth in the same plane of vision, there to shine for some twenty years and then melt into the phantom of the former party once more as the latter grows out from the camera. Shall not that process of change be repeated while lasts the republic? The new national party was the "Whig" party. The attempt to unite the whole opposition to Jacksonism under the name of Whigs began in the spring of 1834, when important State elections followed the first panic caused by the removal of the deposits and the President's firm refusal to restore them. The name itself came first into use at that time in Connecticut and the city of New York, and kindled a blaze throughout the Union, being suddenly and spontaneously adopted.* By "Whig" was expressed the antagonism felt to the high prerogative or Tory doctrines of Jackson,—"King Andrew," as his enemies now called him,—who seemed to have usurped all the functions of state like an absolute monarch. The name pleased the Federal families of New England, never partial to Jeffersonian traditions, and Webster himself had, in 1804, appealed in a Federal pamphlet "to old Whigs."† It pleased the State-rights men at the South, for Hayne had used the word favorably in his debate with Webster, and so had Jefferson in one of the last letters he ever wrote.‡ These Whigs of 1834 announced themselves the true successors of the Whigs of 1776, and likened their course to that of the rebel colonists. Their liberty poles defied the hickory pole. They chose for appropriate emblems the national flag, live eagles, portraits of Washington. In such a party Clay and the war men of 1812 were joined on equal terms by the sons of Revolutionary sires. "I have been educated from my

* See 46 Niles's Register, 101, first used April 12, 1834; Seward's Biography, 237; current newspapers.

† Lodge's Webster, 44.

‡ 7 Jefferson's Works, 433.

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cradle," now proclaimed Webster, with zealous pride, "in the principles of the Whigs of '76."*

To coalesce, then, the old elements of the opposition in this new party was a hopeful task, though time and patience were needful and a delicate tact. The basis consisted of National Republicans; but with these had to be mingled the Anti-Masons, whose leaders had already agreed that their own party was dying out;† Southern seceders from the Democracy, who had broken away these last three years either from principle or personal disgust, and possibly, as a last ingredient, though a poisonous one, the Calhoun nullifiers, whose sweltered venom went into their own incantations. Into this hotchpot of opposition entered presently a medley of minor elements after events had got more headway and Jackson's strong person ceased to be the magnet of his party. In these first years it was hard work to mingle these black spirits and white, blue spirits and gray. Calhoun and his disunion band for the present were sulky, implacable, impracticable, affiliating with no party whatsoever that bore the national ensign; and Clay found his own plastic touch resisted by this new party and himself sent by the general voice to the rear. 1834–35.

Against this new party, or, perhaps we should say, this fœtus of a party, were arrayed at this time the Jackson Democracy, led by the federal office-holders, who used the full strength of their position; all under strict martial discipline. Whatever the chief ordered must be obeyed. These gloried, as well they might, in the noble name of Democrat, and stood the stronger by sinking deeper their base. Their hurrah was for Jackson, the hero of New Orleans, the foe of nullification, the champion of the people against monster monopolies and the money-power. They claimed as theirs the votes of the common people and the friendship, too, of State banks. But a new name and a new subdivision had begun to cleave the ranks of this great party in the Middle States. About New York city

* Seward's Biography, 237.

† 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, March 27, 1834.

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arose a combination opposed to all bank charters, all monopolies; this was the "Equal Rights party," a new growth from the seeds of a workingmen's league which sprang up five years earlier here and in Philadelphia and then died out. Dogmas tending to socialism, such as the British agitator Robert Dale Owen had been preaching, were favored by many of this sect; but their party creed was drawn at the Jeffersonian spring. These principles they proposed: no distinction among men unless founded in merit; gold and silver as the only circulating medium; a strict construction of the fundamental law; elections by a direct popular vote; free trade and direct taxes; and, above all, no perpetuities, no monopolies. Jackson's fight with the United States Bank inflamed the zeal of these against banks and those other moneyed schemes which now rapped loudly at the doors of the New York legislature, highly favored by Democratic leaders of the State and the office-holding nobility. The *Evening Post* was the organ of this new faction. Cautious and secret at first in their gatherings,—for discipline under the Albany regency and Tammany Hall was very strict,—these disorganizers soon mustered strength enough to oppose the regular list made up for Congress and the State legislature. A primary meeting held at Tammany Hall, the usual gathering-place of the Democracy, on an October night forced the fight of the long-fleeced and short-fleeced. The latter blocked up the front entrance, the former entered by the rear and organized a meeting before the doors were opened. But the Equal Rights men now pouring in ignored these sly preliminaries and proceeded to nominate and choose a chairman of their own. There was a struggle for the chair, in the midst of which the regulars, claiming that their ticket had been carried, declared the meeting adjourned and left the hall, and to make the adjournment complete they turned off the gas. Not to be tricked so easily, the independents produced candles and loco-foco matches, lit up the hall again, restored order, and proceeded with the meeting in their own way; and they did

1834-35.

1829.

1835. Oct. 29.

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not adjourn until they had framed a platform and nominated an "equal rights" ticket. The next day a newspaper in jest dubbed these reform Democrats "loco-focos," and that name adhered to the "Equal Rights" faction from that time forward,* and, more than this, it soon extended to the whole Democratic party of the Union, or to the Jackson-Van Buren wing at least which dominated it, and did not disappear for ten years. The leaven, too, of these "equal rights" doctrines worked in politics long after the faction which first formulated them had been sold out by the demagogues who got control of it. Thus fantastical may be the circumstances by which a new political sect gains its name and its lodgment in the popular mind and becomes historical.

The great body of our American democracy has always been better in its creed than its practice. Strong naturally through that fundamental faith in human nature and in man's capacity for unrestrained living which gives it such immense scope in a growing republic, it slips back unconsciously into the mire whence the poverty-stricken millions emerge and falls too easy a prey to vice and ignorance. This is most true of manufacturing towns and the great promiscuous and populous centres where these toilers become the victims of the slums and grog-shops which must thrive by them. The drill and drum-beat of office-holders, first perfected in the Empire State, Jackson made a national regulation, and used the wide patronage of government to draw round him a prætorian band. Nothing gave our national politics so downward a course as this, for office-holding lost the starch of self-respect when men held by the tenure not of merit but political favor. The proscriptive example set by one party the other followed henceforth. Both parties might boast of great leaders, but the opposition had the more intelligent rank and file; so that, as one of our scholars has well expressed it, the Democrats had the better principles, but the Whigs the better men. Southern planters seem to have preferred

* 1 Sumner's Jackson, 370; Byrdsal, 103; 49 Niles, 163.

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the alliance of leaders at the North who, like the Gaelic chiefs, could bring their clans with them; they worked through the machinery of numbers; instinct and tradition, too, bred in them the Jeffersonian distaste for public pomp and public enterprise, and for wealth founded in commerce and the arts; and yet the Whigs, by their devotion to the Union, gained a good footing in that section. The Southerner, on his own soil, was not unlike the Tory squire, having a feudal partiality for lands and vassals; but he was ambitious of national patronage, and this inclined him to persons wherever they could be found. In general, the Democrats sided with persons. But the Whigs, on the other hand, leaned to property, to great public and private undertakings involving money and fostered by privilege and favoritism, and to the men engaged in them. Their party, like the earlier Federalist, soon became the favorite of northern polite circles, of scholars, professional men, the rich and prosperous, tradesmen, bankers, of such as led good society or hung to its skirts, of capitalists and those who bask in the sunshine of capital, but most of all of manufacturers and merchants; classes intelligent, yet timid lest they should lose something, and disposed to personal schemes. Thrifty farmers might join this standard, but rarely did the mechanics and laboring men, the jealous poor, unless seduced or intimidated. Unlike the old Federalist, however, the Whig, with his long training and antecedents, was in sufficient sympathy with popular institutions, only that he preponderated more to paternal and spectacular rule, while Democrats favored self-rule, even at the risk of misrule. The best practical wisdom of the day in trade and finance were at the service of this new party, the most eloquent expounders, too, of such topics; but on the other hand, with such a rank and file, there was constant danger that politics would be measured by the yardstick of expediency, and principle postponed for the sake of heaping up the immediate pile. Launched into the sea of politics, this new ship, staunch and respectable, ploughed the waves under full sail, a conservative in motion.

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Our modern parties in America differ not so much in abstract maxims as in the application of those maxims under the stress of events. Such is the force of circumstances in politics that no intelligent statesman with a long record is likely to be wholly consistent. And it is found, furthermore, that sympathy and self-interest will hold men together in irresponsible opposition long before their principles of responsible action have been fully harmonized. Thus was it in the present crisis, when Jackson's bold assumptions of power drove his adversaries to unite. Their first onset of 1834 seemed flushed with victory. Virginia seated Tazewell, an anti-Jackson Democrat, in the governor's chair. The three days' spring election in New York City mortified the mob of the Irish Democracy. But by autumn of that year the money panic was over, business revived, and the Whigs made less headway. It is true, they carried Maryland, and tore Ohio from the arms of the Democracy; gaining, besides, in Delaware, Virginia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Rhode Island, and Vermont. But light could not penetrate the cranium of Pennsylvania's rural Democracy, whose adhesion to the Bank transfer was not to be explained upon any rational principle. Nor was the ruddy glow in New York State followed by the rising sun. There William H. Seward headed the Whig ticket, "the young man with sandy hair," who was brought out for governor under the auspices of his ally and powerful friend, Thurlow Weed, of the Albany *Evening Journal*, who had begun politics with him as an Anti-Mason. The canvass was a vigorous one; but though Seward polled a large vote in the western part of the State, to which he belonged, that paradise of independents, the eastern Democracy was a phalanx too strong yet to be overthrown, and Marcy was re-elected to office by over 11,000 majority.* 1834.

The fate of the old Bank as a rechartered institution was sealed by these last elections, and it fell by the two great States that owed it the most. The Whigs, having measured

* Seward's Biography, 240; current newspapers.

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their strength, were convinced, as sober men, that their financial policy must abide events, and that the prize, too, of the Presidency was out of reach at present, unless by some fortuity the election could be thrown into the House as it was in 1824. All signs nevertheless encouraged them to perfect their national alliance and march on to local triumphs; for besides their other gains they had finished the first year's campaign with a splendid victory in Massachusetts, where the enthusiasm of this new cause might yet spread through New England. The next two years they gave to organizing and to feeling their party strength. No national convention was called, but the party in various States named Presidential candidates at discretion. The Massachusetts legislature nominated Webster, and a rousing meeting at Faneuil Hall applauded this selection. Justice McLean was put forward in Ohio; Hugh L. White as a sort of independent Democrat in Tennessee and Georgia; General Harrison, the western Cincinnatus, now on his farm at North Bend, by conventions in Indiana and Ohio. A sensible man of plain and kindly manners, with a pedigree and war record and nothing to lacerate, Harrison presently appeared the favorite, because the most available, candidate. The Anti-Masons of Pennsylvania, at a convention held in Harrisburg, presented an olive-branch ticket,—Harrison and Granger; the Pennsylvania Whigs adopted that ticket and coalesced with the party fragment which Granger represented. Webster then withdrew in Harrison's favor, while Clay, whose name had been left out, commended him; both chagrined, however, that the common mind should seek the lesser lustre. In this condition did the Whigs enter the next Presidential contest, Connecticut and Virginia lost to them, and the latter State given henceforth to its vain posings before the mirror and its dagger of lath, never to be trusted for a Whig electoral vote so long as the Whig party lasted. Their infantile condition rendered it probable already that Jackson would at last control the Senate by the Vice-President's casting vote; and yet as a new party they felt

1835.

1835–36.

1835. December.

1836.

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themselves stronger on the whole than the scattered elements from which they had sprung.

Compact and knit together by the tremendous personality of their chieftain, the Democracy met at Baltimore to decide the Presidential succession. Their convention, largely composed of office-holders, met in May, 1835, a full year before the campaign would naturally open, and while their opposers were experimenting. Andrew Stevenson presided, whose English mission was still in expectancy; twenty-two States were represented, but not South Carolina, Alabama, Illinois, nor, fairly speaking, Tennessee. Jackson's rebellious State had sent no delegates; but a Tennessee man named Rucker, happening on the ground, was impressed into the service of the convention, and cast the votes for his State, though frankly owning that he had brought no credentials and represented nobody.* A two-thirds rule was adopted for candidates. Van Buren was unanimously nominated President, and Richard M. Johnson, of Kentucky, by rather a close vote, Vice-President. Jackson had set his heart upon having Van Buren succeed him, and his wish was gratified; but, as great men seldom live at home, his greedy interference turned Tennessee into a Whig State, the friends of Judge White there, among whom was Speaker John Bell, proving of more influence than the Cæsar of the White House. Two only among our Presidents may be said to have named their successors: Jefferson, whose delicate tact suppressed the rivalry of his favorites and parcelled the rule between them for sixteen years, keeping his own State at the head, a feat never to be performed again; Jackson, whose rude dictation bred bitter resentment, and whose sceptre was shattered in the hands of his heir.

1835. May 20.

The mob-spirit of 1834, to which we have adverted,† seemed in the next few years to increase rather than diminish. "Society seems everywhere unhinged," writes a

48 Niles. Hence the word "ruckerize," which lodged for a while in our political vocabulary.

† *Supra*, p. 176.

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faithful chronicler the next year, "and the demon of blood and slaughter has been let loose upon us."* The columns of our weekly press teemed with news of murders, riots, and executions. Mobs were taking the law into their own hands, and settling local disputes after nature's own fashion. A border contest having arisen between Ohio and Michigan, Ohio proceeded like a sovereign State to enforce her own boundaries. Lynch law in the Mississippi region strung up the robber, gambler, and pickpocket on the nearest tree. Thousands were interpreting the law as they saw fit, and applying their own penalties. In our most populous cities riots blossomed out of all kinds: Irish riots over O'Connell and the battle of the Boyne, "nigger riots," native American riots, riots at the primaries and the polls, riots of the poor against the rich. Boston was the battle-ground of imported animosities, where Corkonians and Kerrymen tussled together. In New York arose a series of "Five Points riots" over an attempt to raise a regiment, styled the O'Connell Guards, which was finally abandoned, the mayor scarcely keeping down the mob, meantime, with a full posse of police. Baltimore, which had been a quiet city since the bloody times of 1812, was plunged into violent disorders, beginning with the excitement over a broken bank; anarchy got the upper hand through the weakness of the civil authorities, private houses were sacked and burned, and the pillage might have been terrible had not that veteran patriot, Samuel Smith, accepted a spontaneous call to the mayoralty, and restored order with a firm hand. Strikes, too, of which earlier instances had scarcely been heard, were frequent this summer among workingmen in the great Middle States, the coal-heavers on the Schuylkill setting a notable example; and, as a new symptom in the relation of our labor to capital, a relation peaceful enough in its former modest proportions, combinations now started up of men who would not work themselves for the price to prevent others from working, and the strikers, after

1835. September.

1835.

* 49 Niles, 1.

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holding incendiary meetings, would march through the streets to the drum and fife as though for drawing in the whole populace to coerce employers and fix the rate of wages.* The struggle between labor and capital, which the vastness of our modern enterprise engenders, begins with this period, though the violence of these spasmodic combinations soon yielded to more quiet and permanent modes of organizing.

Let us pardon something to the spirit of American liberty, which was now taking a new and freer flight. America certainly was at this time prosperous and advancing towards a richer range of life. In nations, like individuals, there comes that stage of development when the young blood leaps wildly and the sense of animal vigor tempts the healthy body to use and even abuse its functions. The swathing bands of discipline were being removed from the limbs of our common people; and why not romp and range and ravage, indulging the lusty appetite until experience has taught that salutary lesson of self-constraint which is the last corrective? Yet the discipline of society must be faulty, indeed, which leaves all to self-discipline. Among the political follies of this day the sage might perceive an increasing tendency to popular legislation, such as the abolition of the death-penalty, the treatment of crime as a sort of disease to arouse one's pity, the relaxation of all punishment, all restraint. But is natural impulse the true barometer of character? Do not the wild excesses of youth sow the seeds of premature death or a corrupt old age? This administration had been taking off the bandages; non-interference was the essence of the democratic dogma; America, obeying the law of its passion, was heading to violent collision and corruption. Many of us, to be sure, despaired too easily; and Europeans held up this picture of American life as a warning to their own countries. But the spectacle of executive encroachment which this administration furnished, of arraying class against class, of bull-baiting, as it were,

* 48 and 49 Niles *passim*; 2 Lamb's New York, 723; papers of the day.

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the rich and respectable for the sport of the populace, of lifting the President into a sort of monarch of the multitude, as though Congress and the judiciary did not represent the people likewise, of dispensing offices like a despot; all this had its pernicious effect in producing the scenes of disorder, happily but temporary, which we have described. Government for this term was one of personal example, honest but barbaric; for Jackson's policy, so nearly excellent in its main pursuit, had become imbued with a spirit of lawlessness, or at least it gave that impression, and the impression produced the injury.

Two elements in the riots and disturbances we have narrated deserve an especial mention, as bearing strongly upon the future of our politics, though little upon the immediate present. One was the native American spirit, shown in the Ursuline and Five Points tumults: a protest, as it were, against foreign influence in our national affairs and religion, under the secret propagation of the Vatican and the Jesuit order. Hibernian immigrants were good Catholics, for the most part, and Democrats as well, thus doubly arousing the jealousy of Puritan descendants. So large a fraction did they make in our civic Atlantic society, that their poll in a close contest might turn the scale in New York city, the poll of New York city the State, and the poll of the State the entire Union. Their hand was upon the primaries and the petty offices. Here, in the earliest riots, Irish Democrats, an unwashed crowd, were the aggressors; they beat respectable citizens, insulted the mayor, knocked down and maltreated the police, and outraged the purity of the ballot-box; but the ringleaders were bailed out by their powerful friends, and prosecutions fell to the ground, while Americans caught in the later commotions were convicted and sent to the penitentiary. Was an ignorant and vicious herd, who could not read or write, to exclude the native-born and educated by brute force, and this floating population of untaxed laborers govern and tax the intelligent property-owners who supported them in and out of the alms-

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house? The second element, and far more portentous one, was the anti-slavery spirit, or rather the turbulence produced by the irresistible collision of slavery and freedom under our fast-expanding system. This latter element let us scrutinize more minutely.

In Eastern story a contest of magic between the genie and enchantress reached its crisis when a pomegranate, which grew before the sight, swelled to huge dimensions and then burst, scattering its seeds in every direction, all of which seeds but one being extirpated, that one contained the germ of fateful disaster. By this simile we may read the problem of American slavery, its past and possibly its future bearing upon the destiny of our race. In 1835 that institution was growing and swelling, though not as yet so large as to rock to and fro and agitate the chamber of the Constitution, upon whose imprisoning walls it finally broke.

After the Missouri Compromise in 1820–21,* the slavery contest in the United States subsided for ten years, and every patriotic opiate was used to keep the question asleep. Southerners quietly sought in the mean time to strengthen their interest in Congress; Northerners were startled into some momentary excitement over the rescue of a runaway slave; foreign philanthropists would sometimes put in a suggestion, such as the cultivation of tobacco and other southern staples at the North. The experiences of ancient Italy and modern Russia were cited to show that slavery devastates the soil, while freedom makes it productive, the alacrity of voluntary labor being always a fair offset to the reluctance of compulsory toil, where the one is remunerated and the other is not. But still the slavery question slumbered. Southern masters, accustomed to reckon the worth of the blacks at so much a head, could not be brought to see that their institution was wasteful; indeed, were too sensitive to be argued with at all. Never, they alleged, was a slave race so well treated as ours; and, so far as physical treatment went,

1821–31.

*See vol. iii, p. 186.

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this was true in the border States at least, for interest as well as the humane inclination must have discouraged cruelty. Of Charleston, New Orleans, and the remote South, however, fearful stories were whispered;* not only in applying the lash or the torture, but in the callous disregard of sexual purity, and of those tender domestic ties which the whole human race holds sacred. Morally the slaves of the South were treated as if they were not stamped with God's image. They were kept under a municipal code which meted out its penalties with nice precision so as to keep them in blind subjugation to the will of a master. The American slave had no civil status, no property, no family rights for the master race to respect. He was purposely bandaged in ignorance, lest light should make him repine: the barest rudiments of learning were denied him in many States, and no physician ever mingled the sedative more carefully than did our cotton-planter contrive that his bondsman's religion, though it might inflame the passions and sensibilities, should not present to his mind the gospel truth as a truth to set him free. Harsh laws might not be strictly carried out where all went smoothly, yet they stood bridled, and the son of ebony was still the waif of capricious chance. Did one leave the auction-block to serve a kind master capable of sheltering him for life, another might be knocked down to some white brute or profligate to be maltreated or gambled away. Nothing so lightened the lot of the American slave as his own sunny and light-hearted disposition, and his docile nature susceptible to kindness.

In the social economy of our wide-arched Union the belt of cotton States far south seemed prosperous and enterprising as their system permitted, confident of a constant market for their increasing products. But Maryland and Virginia, with a diminishing scope for negro employment, ministered to the wants of their far-off brethren and

* Stuart (2 Travels) was told of a South Carolina planter who would punish a slave by screwing him up in a coffin, and the terror of such treatment frightened some negroes to death.

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their own degradation; and, since the suppression of the foreign slave-trade under the stimulus of her earlier and better sentiment, the proud and chivalrous mother of Washington, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry had taken up the humiliating function of slave-breeder and jockey for the South and Southwest. Equal, moreover, as all southern gentlemen were among themselves, hospitable to northern men who visited them on the same footing of well-bred indolence, and content to live for many months of the year in a barren simplicity of style such as almost any thrifty New England farmer would have thought poverty itself, and which constantly astonished visitors who had been led to suppose that slaves and vast acres meant pampered luxury, this race of masters had two dislikes which could not be rubbed out,—a dislike of free blacks and a dislike of mercantile Yankees. Neither tribe did they wish to see increasing among them. The latter they believed to be sordid and cowardly, with souls which chinked among the dollars, taking their type from the lowest of the runners who drummed their section for business. For the former they made laws which increased in severity as the lines to protect the slave system were drawn closer. Though such might migrate, they were forbidden to come in and settle: one of this class became a virtual prisoner in the State where he had been emancipated, and ran great risk of being sold again into slavery. Throughout the South education was refused at length to all of the black race, whether slave or free. They were incompetent witnesses against the whites, and though the free black was in happier plight than his brethren in bondage, the benefit of jury trial was usually denied him. A master might be as brutal as he chose if no white witness were by. Planters themselves were banded too closely to wish any cruelties of their system exposed to comment; and so subservient was the southern press to the system that a slave might be hung for some trifling offence and not one of the local newspapers would report it. Heaven punished the master race for keeping this population so low and benighted by contaminating the morals of the white youth, who mingled

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constantly with these non-moral inferiors, to tyrannize or pamper their softer lusts as they might incline.*

In our free States all the while, the negro, though usually unmolested and permitted to earn his own livelihood, was the victim of caste from the color of his skin, and seldom encouraged to better his condition. He might brush boots, sweep a store, ply the razor, wear a livery, and perform menial work of all sorts for a living, but he was barely a mechanic, and the idea of having him educated up to the standard of a merchant or professional man was not to be thought of. One Prudence Crandall undertook to open a school for colored girls in the town of Canterbury, Connecticut; but so furious an opposition did she stir up that the legislature reached out a hand to suppress, and after suffering brutal annoyances from her neighbors she was forced to close her establishment. And again in this proud State of the common schools, when private benefactors proposed to set up a manual-labor college for blacks in the same city with Yale, New Haven was so alarmed that at a public indignation meeting mayor and respectable citizens joined in voting down the project and threatening resistance by all means lawful.† No such abolition eggs could be laid in alert New England that the good society of the place did not sit down with its whole weight upon the nest and crush them under the rustling folds of its bombazine before the brood could be hatched. The utmost private munificence could do at the North was to teach the young children of the despised race apart the bare rudiments of learning, such a school thriving in New York city under Quaker auspices, through the inattention of a great populace.‡ Negroes and mulattoes were kept humble, even in States where they were on a nominal equality with the whites; to aspire was forbidden;

1833-34.

1831.

* Stuart, Arfwedson, Abdy, and other foreign observers of this period; Seward's Biography, 268, etc.

† 41 Niles.

‡ Arfwedson's Travels (1832); Garrison's Life; Century, vol. viii, p. 780.

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and while one of superior intelligence among them might direct a band of barbers or waiters of his own complexion, a white man would rather starve than work under a jet supervision in any capacity. "Nigger," an epithet everywhere familiar in the United States, marked well the degradation which was nursed in derision. Not a large city in the free States but had its squalid "nigger hill" or "nigger lane," where these people herded together; its "nigger heaven" at the theatre, to which part alone their money gained them entrance; its "nigger pews" in some remote corner of the church, their only accommodation for public worship, unless, more fitly, they chose to gather in their own African churches. In sabbatarian Boston custom permitted the negro citizen to walk about the common on "nigger election day," when the governor came in; but if seen on the ground at the time-honored pageant of "artillery election day" he was hooted off. The Knickerbocker city indulged its annual guffaw over the emancipation procession, when epauletted black marshals, with drawn swords, and sable citizens rode and strutted up Broadway to the music of a brass band on the 5th of July, making travesty, as it seemed, of the celebration of white independence on the day before. In Philadelphia's directory were printed the names of colored citizens with a cross prefixed, to distinguish them, and in other cities it was not unusual to keep the caste lists separate. Northern whites, even those of humane impulses, commiserated the condition of the race without showing much personal sympathy; and the feeling now commonly manifested was a good-natured tolerance of this pariah part of our population, so long as they kept their own place and amused others by their gentle and ape-like buffoonery. Negro minstrelsy and negro manners suffused an influence which insensibly brought the American heart closer to this affectionate and musical race; but the end-men, with begrimed faces, tall dickies, and striped clothes, who flourished the clappers and tambourine in the concert-rooms, caricatured plantation life, and gave only its merry side; while Jim Crow, whose song and jump delighted

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the cads of London in Jackson's day, was a personage of burlesque and black cork without pathos at all. Did an American negro show the slightest sign of insolence or passion, no matter what the provocation, the whole white community, North or South, was upon him in an instant; and were even a mulatto from Hayti, a foreigner of good fortune, good birth, and good manners, to undertake a tour of the free States alone, he would find himself, because of his skin, refused admission to any genteel hotel or restaurant, turned out of the gentleman's cabin on a steamboat, penned off from the body of white worshippers wherever the gospel was preached, and likely to be mobbed if rash enough to occupy a high-priced seat at the theatre or concert. This unchristian treatment of the negro in States the most truly republican was attributable in part to that unaffiliating disposition which marks the Anglo-Saxon through all conditions; but more, perhaps, to the long habit of deference to those fundamental ties which bound slaveholders and non-slaveholders in one confederacy. The great national bugbear everywhere was the dread of amalgamation; that is to say, of promiscuous intercourse and the blending of colors under the legal sanction of a marriage.*

Free blacks now possessed the elective franchise in North Carolina and Tennessee only of the slave States, and in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania alone of the free States. Every free black in Georgia was obliged to have a legal guardian. Even in northern States where negroes could vote they voted meekly by night or stayed away from the polls altogether, and had their names dropped from the lists. A property qualification was imposed by New York's constitution upon colored voters alone, and in Pennsylvania and some other States rights were soon to be withdrawn or curtailed of which the people felt dubious. As for a negro's personal liberty, such was the common

1831.

* See travels of Stuart, Arfwedson, and Chevalier; 1 Garrison's Life, and various newspapers of the day.

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effect of our fugitive slave law that if the ownership of a black human being at the North were brought into controversy one man and no jury decided it; but for a cow or horse of any color a litigant neighbor demanded a jury of twelve men: long possession of one's self was not nine points in favor of his freedom.*

Such, by 1831, was the condition of the negro in the United States, North and South. No strong voice implored heaven on his behalf from pulpit or platform, there was no organized effort to assist emancipation, no efficient one to alleviate the burdens of this distressed race, whether as bond or free. One national association alone, the American Colonization Society, did, or rather fancied itself doing, a philanthropic work, by sending its driblets of free blacks into Africa; but it was like draining off the sea in casks. The means for that enterprise were small, its accomplishment scarcely more than to take the scum from this black broth for the advantage of the enslaver; and it had earned hardly more praise than Henry Clay awarded, its great figure-head for so many years, when he said that this society did not disturb any of the rights, legal or political, which slavery involved, and was voluntary in its operations.† As for the practical abolition to be thus promoted, no one had more clearly exposed the fallacy than Jefferson, and since Jefferson's death no later Southerner had uttered a word or penned a sentence for practical abolition. While the rising sentiment of this section viewed slavery and the southern staples as inseparable, a moral paralysis enfeebled the North. The old abolition convention which used to meet at Philadelphia yearly or biennially lingered till 1829, and then wholly suspended operations for nine years. The State societies for emancipation had slowly dwindled away and disappeared. Our people lay languidly upon the rock of the constitution, trusting or fearing that God's tide 1831.

* See travels of Stuart, Arfwedson, and Chevalier; 1 Garrison's Life, and various newspapers of the day.

† See Clay's speech in 1836; 5 Niles, 40.

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would some day wash out this alluvion of our ancestors,—waiting for a miracle, as the multitude will do in such a crisis, but devising nothing for themselves.

The year 1831 was a momentous one for this institution. In Southampton county, Virginia, slaves rose against their masters with savage butchery. The insurrection was put down by an energetic governor, aided by authorities and citizens in the vicinity and a federal detachment from the Norfolk station. Nearly all these poor negroes who struck for liberty were killed or captured; but the plot, which was found so considerable as to extend over the borders of North Carolina, brought vividly to southern minds the dangers of their system, and masters inclined henceforth to a harsher and more vigilant discipline. They drew the local cords tighter for their mutual protection. In the North this very same year saw an agitation begun to compel immediate emancipation throughout the Union; and the slaveholders, whose throats had so narrowly escaped the knife, suspected these agitators, though without good reason, of instigating the intended massacre.* Between these two fires the southern mind broke out in a blaze, and the sectional conflict began of opposing systems and policy which all the efforts of Union-savers could not long mollify.

1831.

This new abolition movement at the North did not, like the Quaker one of former days, respect constitutional bounds and seek mild persuasion of the white master who held the local law in his hands. It boldly proclaimed that the laws of nature were paramount to a human institution; it preached freedom as of divine right and in defiance, if need be, of the enslaver. But in law-respecting communities like ours all such agitation bruised itself like a bird against the solid wall of the federal constitution, which, wisely or unwisely, surrounded the institution and sanctioned its existence within certain State confines. Antipathy to weaker men and races, and a dogged attachment to property as something with which

*41 Niles; newspapers of the day.

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none others are to interfere, save as their own property may be injured by it, are two strong traits of the Anglo-Saxon. He has a conscience, domestic virtue, and a restraining common sense to be influenced; but of woman herself Shakespeare's Petruchio talked like an Englishman rather than an Italian of his day, when he said, "I will be master of what is mine own." And such was our slaveholder's response to the abolitionist when menaced where he stood. Pride and blind interest banded the southern masters in bristling defiance; patriots of all sections felt the constraint of the written law, and then abolitionism slid into an angry tirade against the constitution as a covenant with death and agreement with hell,* and their creed became "no union with slaveholders,"—in a word, disunion, because instant and legalized abolition was impossible. We shall see in the angry years that follow southern secessionists and northern abolitionists standing upon essentially the same platform, though at opposite ends, both demanding that the American Union be broken up.

The boldest exponent of this new anti-slavery school, the pioneer and arch-agitator of immediate abolition, of conscience above the constitution, was William Lloyd Garrison. He it was who opened this new year as the editor and publisher, in Boston, of a little sheet known as the *Liberator;* sternly resolving that this paper should go forth to the world so long as he could subsist upon bread and water, or find employment with his hands. A practical printer as well as editor, he set up his own type in his obscure den of an office with precarious aid, spelling out by his metal letters thoughts which he had not committed to paper, making up his bed at night on the floor, and subsisting from day to day on modest rations procured from the humble bakery and fruit-shop. One or two liberal friends supplied money and subscriptions. Forced rapidly into notice by a free circulation southward, the *Liberator*, in its

1831. Jan. 1.

* This famous phrase was borrowed from Isaiah xxviii. 18.

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very first year, was so well known and feared that the Georgia legislature offered $5000 for the arrest of any one found circulating it; while the conservative press of the Union denounced the editor as a fanatic, one who was madly doing all the injury possible to the cause he affected to support.* Garrison had deliberately chosen at the start the radical ground he ever after maintained, retracting an assent he had formerly given to the threadbare theory of gradual and persuasive abolition. With merciless severity, he arraigned the frozen apathy of the North and the prostitution of the South on the slavery question; he could not tolerate scruples on behalf of the written law; all doughfaces, apologists, and timeservers he wrote down as traitors and cowards, and unhesitatingly he declared slavery to be a crime and the slaveholder himself a criminal. "I am in earnest," were his words, confessing his own severity; "I will not equivocate; I will not excuse; I will not retreat a single inch; and I will be heard."† A quiet and inoffensive man of aspect, bald-headed, wearing spectacles through which his eyes darted a keen but kindly glance, a strict abstainer from liquors and tobacco; and so gentle withal to look upon that Harriet Martineau declared him the handsomest man she had seen in America, in spite of an excessive self-humiliation which might be ascribed to the consciousness that he was intensely hated by good society; Garrison was impelled on his course by the harsh experience he suffered in a border slave State, which left behind a rankling sense of injury. A poor Yankee boy of much intelligence, he took to the printing craft, like Franklin and many other famous Americans, advancing from a type-setting mechanic to political composer and editor. While young and ardent, he became associated with a veteran philanthropist, Benjamin Lundy, in conducting the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, an anti-slavery sheet, issued at Baltimore. Lundy, a Quaker of that admirable temper which could make of such as

* See 41 Niles, and other papers of the day; 1 Garrison's Life.

† See 1 Garrison's Life, 225, etc.; Johnson's Garrison, chaps. ii, iii.

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Garrison an enthusiastic convert, and yet went up and down the milder slave States unharmed, may be pronounced the last and only self-consecrated abolitionist of the gradual and co-operative school of faith which was now dying out. His slight and fragile figure, on horseback or foot, as he canvassed for his little paper with the big name, and preached colonization, not in Africa, but in Hayti or Texas, was a familiar one in Virginia, Tennessee, and Maryland, as well as the free States farther north, where he tried in vain to organize societies upon his basis of action. Of him it has well been said, that he kept the anti-slavery torch from utterly dying out in its darkest days and then handed it over to the man most fit to feed its blaze anew. But sage and disciple, both earnest in the cause, did not accord in methods when conducting their press together. Garrison, over his signature, advocated immediate and unconditional emancipation, for which offence he was prosecuted; and unable to pay a fine of fifty dollars and costs, he was lodged in the Baltimore jail. His friends paid the fine, and he left Maryland for his native State, resolved that the voice once stifled should be heard again in louder tones. And thus, on the free soil of Boston, the *Liberator* was born. How strangely do one's opinions change with the current of his feelings. Scarcely two years earlier, when a Vermont editor, and a promoter of negro colonization, he had written an ode for Independence day brimming with the Union sentiment, and his appeal to "a people whose hearts are but one" jangled strangely with those bitter invectives of his new press, which declared the American constitution to be "the most bloody and heaven-daring compact ever contrived," and "in the nature of things, and according to the law of God, null and void from the beginning."* 1830.

Garrison soon found northern sympathizers, some of whom were ready to devote wealth and social influence to this new crusade; and among his earliest personal friends were Sewall and Ellis Gray Loring, of Bos- 1831–32.

* 1 Garrison's Life, 140, etc.; Johnson's Garrison, chaps. ii, iii.

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ton, and the generous Tappan brothers, of New York. With the publication of the *Liberator*, the idea was put forth of organizing anti-slavery societies upon its aggressive platform; and Garrison looked to the abolitionists of England, whose work for the British colonies was greatly advanced by means of such associations. But here the practical obstacles were very great. Bible, tract, missionary, and temperance societies absorbed the zeal of thousands who were bent on doing good but dared not touch the plague-spot. Dr. Channing, New England's great leader of liberal thought, was a timid and critical observer, though slowly bracing himself to be outspoken as the friend of the slave; Webster wished for the constitution as it was, and the Union unimpaired; and Everett, as little of a soldier as ever breathed, offered to buckle on the knapsack, shoulder a musket, and march to the aid of his southern brethren, whenever their lives should be jeopardized by a slave uprising. Such influences dominated the vicinity.

1831. Not until the close of 1831 did the first of these new anti-slavery societies take initial steps, which led, early in the new year, to its organization on a dark and stormy night in the humble school-room of a

1832. Jan. 6. colored Baptist church. Twelve persons, all white, subscribed their names and united as the "New England Anti-Slavery Society." A national association, known as the "American Anti-Slavery Society," was organized later. Ancillary societies sprang up rapidly at the North, though often dropping apart and recombining dif-

1833. ferently, since free-thinkers and disorganizers are not held easily to any plan of co-operation. None of their leaders, at all events, could command public opinion sufficiently to institute any real reform. But by lashing the Union into fury the abolitionists urged forward their cause; sleep was murdered when their harsh fire-bells star-

1833-34. tled the air. The early course of these societies showed indeed the radical difficulty they labored under of devising some plan, fair and feasible, for promoting their ends. They tended to anarchy, incendiarism, in all their actions; they sent not peace, but a sword. Gar-

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rison himself was a bomb-thrower, openly assaulting the constitution, because he saw it a strong prison-house. He tried in vain to induce freemen to abstain from buying slave-produced cotton and tobacco; instead of denouncing the crime of slavery, to identify the planter as a criminal, man-stealer, oppressor, pirate; to treat the constitution as a compact absolutely void for its guilt. None outside his small circle would embrace such tenets; to the constitution all true Americans clung as the ark of the covenant. But the new agitators were not long in sending a broadside into the American Colonization Society, now crippled with debt and seeking funds from the English abolitionists. Hastening abroad, as an emissary of the associations he had organized, Garrison, at the critical moment, assaulted that society so brilliantly on British soil as to destroy its prestige forever: the British philanthropists renounced its support, the great Wilberforce shortly before his death setting the example. 1833.

It was this same year that the great cause of emancipation in the British West Indies, to which Wilberforce, Clarkson, and their associates had so long directed their persevering efforts, triumphed in the passage of an act of Parliament. It provided a sort of preliminary apprentice system for the negroes, and compensation to their former owners. That statute which struck the fetters from eight hundred thousand colored people close to our Atlantic coast produced a profound impression upon our citizens, both South and North. In the glow of the moment, the Garrisonians, eager to infuse the British anti-slavery zeal into their own cause, committed a great indiscretion. They inflamed our sensitive community both by their unpatriotic comparisons, and by assuming to import foreign anti-slavery orators, as if to force the southern bulwark with the aid of the nation whose interference was of all foreign powers the most intolerable. Great Britain's abolition cause differed greatly from ours; hers was in a distant colony, ours at home; there insular opinion impressed a legislature competent to decree anything; and there, too, the freedom was not granted without terms 1833.

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considerate to the master, which our moralists scorned to imitate; for to recompense our slaveholder, so Garrison proclaimed, would be paying a thief for giving up stolen property and acknowledging his crime to be no crime.*

The conflict thus violently opened did not cease in this Union until slavery was crushed by the heel of fratricidal war. The immediate fruit, at such a time, of inflammatory appeal on the one hand and slave insurrection on the other was mob outrage in northern cities, where the excitement most centred;† and though, as in most mobs, the ignorant and vicious gained the upper hand, there was not wanting in these anti-slavery riots a sterling patriotism, which meant in its blind way to put down the wild anarchists, as they seemed to be, who were trying to subvert the pillars upon which rested the American fabric and the salvation of society. Bands of rowdies, during the turbulence of 1834 in Philadelphia and New York, broke up abolition meetings, attacked the presses, and threatened the persons of the chief agitators; they rampaged the negro quarters of the city, doing wanton mischief. But by 1835 the popular feeling against these "apostles of fanaticism" was exasperated by their own blind course of action. They had hired George Thompson, a British lecturer of imprudent speech, to harangue northern multitudes for immediate emancipation, a cause which northern States were powerless to effect peaceably. They had deluged the South with incendiary pamphlets, whose tendency, whether they so meant it or not, was to excite the slaves to rise against their masters. This latter appeal to terrorism was the device of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which set aside a large sum of money to circulate gratuitously their seditious writings where it was death to distribute them openly. Tracts and periodicals printed expressly for this purpose, with pictures even more inflammatory than the text they illustrated,—the master with scourge in his hand and his victim at his feet,—were

1834–35.

* 1 Garrison, 151.

† *Supra*, p. 200.

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struck off by the thousand, some printed on cheap muslin handkerchiefs, and deposited in the mails for the South. The best anti-slavery statesmen, such as Adams, have believed that the purpose was incendiary; and though agitators denied that they intended more than to reach the conscience of southern legislatures, this denial was not accepted; denying that they sent such documents to the slaves, they tacitly confessed mailing them to free blacks. The grave charge, never explicitly denied by them, that this was an experiment to terrify the master by kindling a new insurrection among the blacks, was made and reiterated by our whole people, and the abolitionists were deterred from trying such methods again. It was a foolish experiment; for, as white men handled the mails, the leather bags were sure to belch out this dangerous matter. A package of these tracts discovered at Philadelphia was taken to the middle of the Delaware river and sunk there. In Charleston the mail-pouches were emptied of such contents, and three thousand citizens gathered by night to see a bonfire made of the documents and the chief men of the anti-slavery societies hung and burned in effigy. A Richmond meeting July. invoked the interference of the Postmaster-General to stop the delivery of such infamous matter, and adjured all Union brethren at the North to re- August. press the societies issuing them "by strong yet lawful means." The North was not mute in this emergency. Meetings in New York, and in most other large cities, were held to denounce all Southampton methods of emancipation. In Boston's Faneuil Hall Mayor Lyman presided at a meeting of respectable citizens, who were addressed by Seth Sprague and Harrison Gray Otis. August. Instead of purging himself of suspicion, Garrison, in his paper, turned tauntingly upon this meeting: the cradle of liberty, he said, has become the refuge of slavery. This incensed the citizens more than ever against him; and it so happened that George Thompson, his imported friend, now upon his inflammatory tour, said in one of his intemperate speeches that southern slaves ought, or at least

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had a right, to cut the throats of their masters. Boston was becoming too hot to hold these two men. While Garrison kept out of the city, a double gallows was set up for a warning before his house; and when, a few weeks later, the British disturber was announced by posters to address a women's anti-slavery meeting by day in the busiest quarter of the city, a crowd which quickly swelled from a hundred to five thousand persons gathered about the building, which stood on the east side of Washington street, a little below the old State House, at that time occupied as the City Hall. It was early in the afternoon. Thompson, the chief object of their rage, did not arrive; and, increasing in turbulence with their numbers, the mob forced the women's meeting to adjourn. Still besieging the entrance to this building, they next turned their thoughts to the editor of the *Liberator*, who was known to be inside. Garrison fled by the rear, but, being caught, was led unresistingly from the back yard through a crooked lane into State street, a rope about his body and his clothing partly torn. While his captors were irresolute what to do with him, many proposing that he should be ducked in the frog-pond, a few stalwart men in the crowd, who pitied his plight and were unwilling that their own fellow-citizen should take the punishment intended for an English brawler, managed to hustle Garrison into the City Hall opposite, where, on the advice of the mayor, whom his press had been abusing, he consented to be put into a close carriage and driven through the crowd to the jail, where he remained all night, as if under arrest, and was then released. Escaping further violence by this stratagem, he left Boston secretly the next day, self-exiled for a season, though issuing his newspaper from that city as before. Thompson, the lecturer, warned in good season by the angry aspect of his audiences, suddenly disappeared, cutting his tour short, and was smuggled out of the United States in a sailing-vessel.*

Oct. 21.

Such were the early episodes which gave Garrison and

* See 2 Garrison's Life, chap. i, for a full narrative.

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his fellow-apostles a picturesque place in our annals, though the worst sufferers for the cause at present were the poor negroes their zeal had befriended. Sub- 1835.
siding now into smoother and more legitimate channels of influence, and dividing, moreover, among themselves upon the ways and means of agitation, they were soon favored by the current of events, though untractable theorists to the last. They were not actors in affairs, but agitators, critics, come-outers, coiners of cutting epithets, who scourged men in public station with as little mercy as ever the slave-driver did his victim, less pleased that their work was being done than displeased because it was not done faster. Their political blunders widened the chasm between North and South, and their constant instigation was to throttle that law which was the breath of our being, to trample down the Union rather than convert, constrain, or conquer slavery behind the shield of the constitution. This was because of their fanaticism. Not one leader of this school ever took a responsible part in affairs, or co-operated in lawful and practical measures for promoting the reform they caressed in their preaching. But whatever interpretation this crusade for immediate abolition might admit of, it could have no effect South, unless by terrifying the masters in the slave States, those robbers and man-stealers, who—strange paradox—were under the municipal law no robbers, no criminals at all. It did not terrify, but it hardened them; and wounded pride made them more determined than ever to maintain their system, come what might,—to rivet it more firmly upon the Union, or else to leave the Union and set up for themselves. In the North, however, the anti-slavery cause grew and continued to grow, for the agitators were felt to be in earnest and morally right. This early violence was regretted; it reacted favorably to abolition, and the abolitionists might scold and censure henceforth under the license of free discussion. The chief "apostle and martyr of emancipation,"*

* A title given to Garrison as early as 1833, and even before his visit to England. 1 Abdy's Travels, 14.

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though ceasing not to irritate, was molested no more at home; and Boston, the seat of Whig sobriety, was spared those grosser scenes of riot and destruction which disgraced the Jacksonian cities in these turbulent years. The *Liberator* still forged its thunderbolts, and, though social disdain long pursued Garrison and his friends, embittered by the caustic severity of their pen and speech, their moral firmness gained sympathizers, as it always does: their one idea was abstractly right. The essential gain of all this was to awaken the northern conscience from its long sleep, and force up opinion to the healthier plane of conforming the human decree to the divine; as for the slave, the negro, he rose to be an object of sentiment, rarely seen, little comprehended, never studied on his plantation surroundings, and personal or race sympathy had nothing scarcely to do with raising up champions for him. Garrison had the spirit of prophecy, nor was he wholly mistaken when, on taking up his parable, he wrote, "Posterity will bear testimony that I was right." Better this agitation, though it sent a two-edged sword, than the poisonous lethargy before it; better a quarter-century of sharp collision, followed by the desperate struggle for the mastery, than another century of corrupt growth and bonded misalliance. Hate-producing as were the winged words of these agitators, no gentler purgative, perhaps, could have done the work; for in all moral reforms, as philosophy teaches us, and wherever God's image becomes distorted in the mirror of human custom, change works in a progressive cycle: fearless reproof brings persecution of the reprover, persecution brings sympathy, sympathy leads to reaction, and reaction to reformation. But too complex were the agencies which now began working out the slave's salvation for any one man or set of men to appropriate them. Whether one shall admire most the bold denunciator, whose speech irritates thought into action, or the enlightened statesman, who accomplishes for reform all that his age will admit and respects the limitations of social ordinance, or the grim warrior who wins the fight, his temperament must decide. History should do justice to all; and, though timid and

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truckling at times, that public conscience is not to be despised which long struggled between moral obligation and loyalty until loyalty itself opened the means of escaping the curse.

In the new Congress which now assembles we may mark the signs of a gathering conflict between freedom and slavery. The preponderance of sectional views begins to appear in national politics. Both branches having a quorum on the first day, the administration showed its strength in the House by the choice for Speaker, on the first ballot, of Polk over John Bell, the late incumbent.* Bell had been read out of the Democracy for supporting Judge White's claims for President; a Tennessee quarrel this, with a Tennessee discipline. Dec. 7.

A southern slaveholder himself,—though slavery, we should recall, was a system much milder where broken up and dispersed among moderate farms on the high tablelands of border States like Tennessee than in the staple-growing plantations of greater extent,—Jackson at once arrayed his administration and party against these new agitators known as the abolitionists. The question of permitting the incendiary tracts of the Anti-Slavery Society to go South through the mails had been submitted the past summer to Kendall, the new Postmaster-General, by the postmasters at Charleston and New York city. Kendall's reply avoided the difficulty of definite instructions; but he did intimate that the United States ought not to transmit matter which State laws had prohibited, and upon this point the postmasters threw out the seditious writings, and were not punished for it. This line of argument Kendall pursued in his annual report, admitting that there was no act of Congress which touched the case; he justified by the extremity what had been done. Addressing Congress more directly on this point, the President, in his message, alluded to the late excitement produced in the South "by attempts to circulate July.

* The ballot stood 132 to 84, 9 votes scattering.

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through the mails inflammatory appeals addressed to the passions of the slaves, in prints and in various sorts of publications, calculated to stimulate them to insurrection, and to introduce all the horrors of a servile war." And commending the good sense, generous feeling, and deep-rooted attachment to the Union which, in the non-slave-holding States, had discountenanced these wicked attempts of misguided persons, which were not likely to be persisted in, he suggested "the propriety of passing such a law as will prohibit, under severe penalties, the circulation in the southern States, through the mail, of incendiary publications intended to instigate the slaves to insurrection."*

This was a delicate matter to legislate upon, and the more so in view of the approaching elections. To destroy mail matter was to destroy private property without due process to law. The mischief, in fact, had already worked out its own cure, and these abolition societies, losing ground for the moment in Boston, in eastern and western New York, in Pennsylvania, in Vermont, wherever, in fact, they undertook to hold open meetings, now came to the more legitimate line of petitioning Congress in behalf of the slave. Northerners had already begun to regret their own mobs and intolerance; and though resenting still all British interference with such concerns, they looked upon our native agitators as a species of madmen who ought to be gently treated. The arrogant tone of the South increased this reaction; for now was heard the crack of the spoiled master's whip, and Union lovers at the North were asked peremptorily for new pledges of their fealty to the compact. Garrison, Arthur Tappan, and other chief agitators must be handed over to southern authorities for prosecution and condign punishment. Mails must be searched, abolition societies suppressed with the strong arm, all discussion prohibited on the slave question, and slavery itself

1835.

* Exec. Docs., 24th Congress; 49 Niles, 256, 277. See 1 Curtis's Webster, 528.

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treated as an institution rooted forever in the national system. These and similar demands were made in southern meetings and by the southern press, under threats of non-intercourse and disunion in case of refusal. Meantime, mobs in the South had not only intercepted the mails, but gibbeted suspected blacks, and set a price upon the heads of the most offensive of northern agitators. What was noticeable most, though, in all this commotion, was the mischievous turn which southern presses in Calhoun's interest gave to this agitation, as though concerted feeling and action were the only means of saving the cherished institution of the South from northern outrage. The *Charleston Mercury* issued a solemn manifesto, 1835. entitled "The Crisis," which announced that a convention of the slaveholding States could alone produce a pressure sufficient to act upon public opinion at the North and put down abolitionism. Democrats like Benton, who swore by the whole Union, traced the arch-nullifier's guiding hand in this new effort to unite the South upon the slave issue, where tariff had failed to unite them; and an insidious report which Calhoun now prepared, as chairman of a select committee in the Senate, appointed on his own motion, confirmed their apprehension. This committee, to which was referred that part of the President's message relating to incendiary matter in the mails, reported a bill forbidding all such transmission under severe penalties. The report, of which Calhoun and Mangum wished five thousand extra copies printed, was objectionable to their colleagues and the Senate in two respects: it vamped up the Satanic dogma that the constitution was a compact; and its language, besides, was inflammatory, fanning alarms over the new abolition movement. This disorganizing report and the debate it drew forth showed that Calhoun was joined again to his secession idols; while the temper even of slave-State senators was to hold up the allies of the Union against Calhoun and Garrison alike. The reported bill, though professing to meet the President's proposal, hung fire until June, when Grundy offered a substitute, which the 1836. June 2.

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Senate agreed to, Calhoun, by a tie vote, being twice prevented from amending it; and at last the bill failed of passage altogether;* Buchanan, Silas Wright, and Tallmadge voting for it, with Grundy, Calhoun, White,
June 8. and other southern senators, while Benton, Clay, and Crittenden joined the northern Whigs in the negative. The House steering clear of the subject, Congress took no action in consequence in the repression of mail matter.

Southern alarmists, however, carried another part of their programme with better success, though in the end this cost them dearly. While abolitionists quailed before the indignation their folly had excited, calm Quaker philanthropy turned the agitation into a safer channel by petitioning Congress, as had been done in former years, to abolish slavery within the District of Columbia, a territory in which the nation's authority was supreme. Many holding anti-slavery views, in Massachusetts, Ohio, and elsewhere, women among them, joined in this legitimate request. A memorial of this kind Buchanan presented in the Senate, and, while dissenting from the prayer,
1836. Jan. 11. thought the petitioners entitled to respect; for these, he said, were no fanatics seeking to disturb southern society by scattering firebrands, but a body of Christians whose object had always been to promote peace and good-will among men. But Calhoun had made a motion to reject all anti-slavery petitions whenever presented, not upon their merits or after consideration, but beforehand, and at the very threshold of their reception. This made the starting-point of a long and acrimonious discussion, which occupied both Houses for several years: slaveholders trying to bowstring all agitation of the question by summary rules which forbade to every such memorial the decency of a reference. This infringement upon "the sacred right of petition" served only to anger the North, and give the tottering abolitionists a new and stronger impulse, until, at length, the sense of the majority in

* By a vote of 19 to 25. 1 Benton's View, 585; 49 Niles, 391, 408; Congressional Debates.

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Congress compelled the "gag-rule" to be abandoned. The flood of anti-slavery memorials subsided when, the entrance forced, public attention was attracted no longer. At this session the contest began. Other petitions besides that we have mentioned were offered in the first two months of the session, praying for abolition in the District of Columbia. Calhoun at once took the new and extreme ground that Congress had no right to legislate in this instance; and he led off in demanding that the Senate should refuse to receive the Quaker petition. Only a small fraction of that body sustained him, however.* Outvoted by his fellow-slaveholders, he testily refused to vote on Buchanan's motion; namely, to reject the prayer of the petition: this was carried by a vote nearly unanimous.† But the House, meantime, under the lead of Calhoun's friend, Henry L. Pinckney, of the Charleston district, had taken a different course with such petitions. Here it was resolved to refer the memorials to a select committee, with instructions. The committee reported two resolutions: (1) that Congress had no constitutional authority to interfere with the institution of slavery in any State; (2) that Congress ought not to interfere with slavery in the District of Columbia. These were adopted by the House, as also a resolve more objectionable, which, for the purpose of arresting agitation and "restoring tranquillity to the public mind," proposed "that all petitions, memorials, resolutions, propositions, or papers relating in any way to the subject of slavery or the abolition of slavery shall, without being either printed or referred, be laid upon the table, and that no further action whatever shall be had thereon." This last resolve, adopted in the House by one hundred and seventeen to sixty-eight, formulated the first of the famous "gag-rules" in Congress.‡ The policy was one upon which

January.

March 9.

March 11.

Feb. 8.

May 18.

May 26.

* He was outvoted 10 to 36. Congressional Debates.

† By 34 to 6.

‡ 1 Benton, 609, 620–21; 49 and 50 Niles; Congressional Debates.

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slaveholding members themselves were divided, and it was unwise, for it gave such petitions too much consequence.

Calhoun in a speech to his constituents, soon after the session adjourned, regretted the concessions which the Senate had made on this subject. In these concessions he saw the cause of increased activity on the part of northern incendiaries, whose poison, such were the ample funds, the organization, and the energy of the abolitionists, would be imbibed by the young, the thoughtless, and the enthusiastic of that section. "But we of the South," he added, "have the constitutional means, and should, with union and concert, protect ourselves."*

While the air was full of northern apology and disclaimer, so that Governor Marcy, of New York, when declining to surrender a citizen of that State who was an anti-slavery publishing agent for punishment in Alabama upon some quibbling demand for him as a "fugitive from justice," felt obliged to abuse the abolition society to which that citizen belonged, there stood an aged man in Congress, not affiliated with the abolitionists, who was resolved, nevertheless, that abolitionists should be respected in their right to petition. This man was John Quincy Adams, now entering upon the last and grandest stage of his public career. Offending both Webster and Clay by his course on the French question, though a party Whig, he had just felt at home the weight of Webster's displeasure.† Several of these petitions in the House for abolishing District slavery had been offered by him; at the same time that he believed any such abolition was unsuitable at present, and as for the "small, shallow, and enthusiastic party" which preached immediate emancipation everywhere, his mind accused its leaders of lawless exertion to kindle in the South the flame of servile insurrection. Though a liberal in religion, their infidelity and war upon the churches shocked and angered him. Active co-operation with these anti-slavery societies he could not give, his views differing from theirs, as his Diary confessed,

1836.

* 51 Niles, 79.

† *Supra*, p. 188.

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under a sense of the compact and compromise in the constitution which bound him.* But Adams was not disposed to deprecate and define: he allowed his public attitude courageously to explain itself; and the spirit of mob-repression which he saw growing at the North, the obsequious response of northern men in authority to imperious demands which Southerners had no right to make, vexed him no less than the intemperate arraignment of our slaveholding brethren as murderers and man-stealers. He saw the breakers afar off. "Slavery," he noted, despondingly, "is, in all probability, the wedge which will ultimately split up this Union. It is the source of all the disaffection to it in both parts of the country."†

While the House deliberated upon the question of receiving these anti-slavery petitions, Adams pressed his mute memorials for the usual decent reference. But when, under the lash of Wise and his haughty clique, who thought the Pinckney report and resolutions only too moderate for the occasion, the insolent gag-rule was put to vote, he sprang from his chair when his name was called at the head of the list. "I hold the resolution," he cried out, in a piercing voice, which was clearly heard, "a direct violation of the Constitution of the United States, of the rules of this House, and of the rights of my constituents."‡ From that moment the hoary sage championed the right of petition in this arena. No debater of either House approached him in skill and daring on this issue; most other representatives from his section feared to be confounded with the abolitionists. This New England Hampden brought the roundhead back to politics. This strife in the House lasted many years before opinion came to Adams's side, and the rule was repealed. In one of his comments upon the slaveholders' dogma, that Congress could not interfere with slavery in the States, he made the splendid assertion that, under the war power in case of civil disorder, the national government could con-

May 26.

* 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 1834–36.
† Ib., Oct. 14, 1833.
‡ Ib., May 26, 1836.

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trol the whole subject. That assertion startled South and North, but long after Adams's death it woke the trump of doom. Persistent, meantime, in vindicating the right of petition, his boldness, pertinacity, and parliamentary ability kept his antagonists at constant disadvantage, and he shamed while exasperating them. In this very Congress, at the short session, the Speaker ruled unexpectedly that the order for rejecting such petitions had expired with the former session; the gag was therefore renewed, southern members thinking well of the contrivance, and believing that the North would submit to it. But Adams persisted in bringing his petitions forward; getting them at least on the record under various feints, raising points of order, and keeping the House in constant ferment. At length a thrilling scene occurred: the old man caught up one day, as the last of a batch of memorials on his desk, a paper which he said purported to come from twenty-two slaves, and he asked the Speaker to decide what should be done with it. Polk, amid confusion, asked the sense of the House in a matter so extraordinary. Members gathered in from the lobbies when they found what was going on, and the House was quickly excited. Cries of "Expel him! expel him!" were heard on all sides. Nothing but the age and antecedents of Adams saved him at this moment from personal violence. Southerners, who cursed him between their teeth, were in distraction to decide how to punish and at the same time preserve the outraged dignity of the House and their section. Some thought the petition ought to be burnt. At last Thompson, of South Carolina, moved a resolution of censure, for which one and another of his southern colleagues offered a substitute, none feeling quite sure how to turn the phrase properly, while some of their cooler friends, like Patton, observed that, as the gentleman from Massachusetts had only submitted the point for decision, he ought not be harshly dealt with; and what if the paper should prove to be a hoax, not emanating from slaves at all? For three days the debate went on, Adams keeping his pursuers at bay and their perplexity increasing. Cool

1837. Jan. 9.

Feb. 6.

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and self-possessed, while all was turmoil about him, he appealed to the Speaker to say whether he had not asked his decision upon the preliminary question, instead of presenting or offering to present the petition on his own responsibility; and, as for the contents of the paper, the prayer was against abolition, and not for it. Dromgoole, of Virginia, who was a good tactician in his sober moments, proposed that the censure should read for "giving color to an idea" that slaves had the right to petition; and this odd expression Adams riddled through with his sarcasm until the House laughed with him. The farce of discipline broke down, and the resolutions of disapproval failed to pass, even after the sting of censure had been taken out of them. Two days later the House, coming back to the point from which members had wandered, declared as its sense that the petition in question could not properly be received, and, furthermore, that slaves had no right of petition: resolutions to this effect passed by large majorities.*

Feb. 9.

Feb. 11.

But to return to the first session of this Congress and its work. A new State, Arkansas, was formally admitted, with a constitution which made slavery perpetual.† This, the first new member of the Union since the great Missouri struggle, found the usual counterpart, for free Michigan, delayed for some formalities until the following January, gave to our national flag its twenty-sixth star, and the original galaxy was doubled.‡ Meanwhile, the disputed line between Ohio and Michigan was definitely bounded in Ohio's favor.§ The general post-office was reorganized as

1835. Dec. 7.–1836. July 4.

1836.

* 51 Niles, 385, etc.; Adams's letter to constituents (1837). In a letter to the press, Adams soon confirmed the suspicion which had been gaining ground, that the paper was a forgery by some slaveholder, who had not supposed that his intended butt would turn the tables so cleverly.

† Acts June 15 and 23, 1836.

‡ Acts June 15 and 23, 1836, and January 26, 1837.

§ Act June 23, 1836; *supra*, p. 200. Michigan was vexed on this

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advised by Kendall.* But the act which drew the most attention was financial; it confirmed the President's rude transfer of the public moneys, and regulated the system of deposits for the future with the State banks.† By still another law the Secretary of the Treasury was permitted to sell out the government shares in the Bank of the United States and dissolve the partnership forever.‡ The stock was shrewdly sold, and when the directory, putting on their boldest face, would pay a good premium without wincing; and almost simultaneously we see this proud institution, which has been dismissed from the national service, transformed into a State bank under an enabling charter from Pennsylvania. So hideous in bribes and public largesses was the cost of wringing this charter from the legislature that the institution ran rapidly the course of ruin like a maiden lost to shame. With its business curtailed and its branches sold out, a capital stock of $35,000,000 was much too large for present operations; but a fatuous credulity still clung to the Bank, hoping for its reinstatement by Congress.

One more act must be mentioned, induced by the approach of the elections and the prosperous condition of the finances. For the first time the young giant republic was free from debt and a large surplus remained in the treasury. What to do with this and future surpluses puzzled the men of affairs. It was a question to which the constitution furnished no answer. To the strict constructionist all plans might fail of a constitutional warrant. The import scale was already fixed by the tariff compromise of 1833; upon internal improvements the Democracy had set its heel; to give away the public lands would be prodigal partiality to the West. Again did Clay introduce his bill for distributing the revenue from the public lands among all the States; it passed

1836. May–June.

point. Her admission was held subject to the acceptance of this boundary line. One convention, September, 1836, declined admission on such terms, but a later one, in December, acceded to it.

* Act July 2, 1836. † Act June 23, 1836. ‡ Ib.

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the Senate, but was tabled in the House. In this exigence the idea of distributing a surplus revenue among the States was embodied in various measures and coupled with the regulation deposit bill, which carried it safely through; and to meet Jackson's scruples and avoid a veto this was called a temporary deposit without interest, and not a positive gift from the United States. All the surplus remaining in the treasury on the 1st of January, 1837, above $5,000,000, was to be thus deposited with the several States in proportion to their representation in Congress; these deposits were to be made by the Secretary on quarter days,—the first of January, April, July, and October. Highly popular in a Presidential election year, this measure pleased men of all parties; Jackson approved the bill; and had he not done so, two-thirds of both Houses would most likely have carried it over his veto. The sequel showed that the specious name of deposit served only to disguise what was really a gift to the States never to be recalled; that a moderate debt whose interest absorbs the spare revenue is a great incentive to economy; and that of all public blessings a national surplus is the most deceptive and fleeting.* The signing of this surplus distribution bill was the only official act, so it appears, which Jackson ever openly regretted, an admission remarkable for one of his temper; and, generally speaking, it is bad policy, if not unconstitutional, besides, for the federal government to take money from the people for the sake of distributing it among the several States. But here a national surplus was inevitable under the tariff compromise; and it was better, perhaps, to make a practical dividend of it among the States than to let these fondling depositories of the President turn the spare millions of the public gold into their greedy speculations which were now expanding more and more every day.

A week before this session was over died Madison, the

* Act June 28, 1836, sections 12 and 14. See next chapter.

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earliest leader in the House, and latest of the founders of this republic. Madison was the last survivor of
1836. June 28. the great Virginians. Pure, amiable, and high-minded, the latest labor of his life had been to expel from southern veins, if he could, the poison of secession; setting the protest of '98, in which he had shared,* upon its true historical ground, and warning the youth of his section, though in vain, that disunion was of all remedies the most fatal to his interest that a slaveholder could possibly apply. Marshall, the chief-justice, had passed away in the previous summer,—a man whose clear intellect and sense of justice needed no swathe of
1835. July 6. citations to pierce a legal principle to the bottom. Head of the national judiciary for nearly thirty-five years, while Presidents came and went, and swaying a bench whose membership seldom changed, by his quiet energy and force of character, his simple manners and imperturbable temper, he stole into the hearts of the American people by slow degrees while building about them an impregnable wall of precedents. The supremacy of the nation was his design, and silent continuity the source of his power. Stronger than any maker of the laws is he who can long construe them.† Marshall had made the Supreme Court a bulwark against the encroaching tide of Jeffersonian Democracy; and through him Federalism impressed the image of the republic with its last and softest touches. His death left a bench of able associates, all of whom had seen political service, but none save Story ranked among famous jurists. Story's promotion to chief-justice was impossible under the present administration. A new career now awaited the court, and the hero of blood and iron impelled it forward; having fought the national judiciary, he now remodelled it. Three

* Vol. i, 423–425.

† The influence of the decision in the Dartmouth College case, for instance, which forbade State legislatures to repeal an act of incorporation once granted, has been remarkable. In some States (*e.g.*, Ohio) the legislature tried to subvert this doctrine. 57 Niles, 385; and see Lodge's Webster.

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out of the five associates, McLean, Baldwin, and Wayne, had already been seated under his commission; Philip P. Barbour, of Virginia, he added as the sixth, in place of Duval, who had resigned. But Jackson's triumph came when a chief-justice had to be named; and Taney, rejected so lately by the Senate as Secretary of the Treasury, because he had removed the deposits, and again thrown out by adversaries for associate justice, now reached the very pinnacle of his wishes; for scarcely had this Congress met when the President named him as Marshall's successor, and his confirmation followed. The Senate triumvirate, baffled and mortified, now viewed this tribunal with jealous distrust, and the country soon perceived a leaning to southern ideas. Judicial manners were changing in these years. Peck, a district judge of Missouri, had been impeached for arbitrary conduct towards counsel; the trial failed to convict, like the earlier one of Justice Chase, and as all such impeachments are likely to; but it induced the passage of a law which greatly curbed the power of our judges to punish for contempt, as the English common law had defined it, and our federal judges were taught to enforce decorum in court by inspiring respect rather than by petty fines and imprisonment.*

1836.

1835. March–December.

1836. March.

1831.

The collision of the State of Georgia with the Supreme Court in 1830-31 while extending its jurisdiction over the Cherokee Indians has already been noticed.† That collision lasted yet longer, both Georgia and Alabama being firmly resolved to maintain authority within their own borders. The Cherokee nation, under advice from officious friends, sought the shelter of the federal and federalized tribunals. It was a hard problem: northern philanthropists, always sentimental, leaned to the side of these Indians, too far off for disagreeable neighbors, who were yielding to Christian influences and the arts

1830–1831.

* Act March 2, 1831; 2 Statesman's Manual, 981.

† See vol. iii, pp. 477–479.

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of civilized life; but white men of the South in their immediate vicinity could ill brook the equality of a race of different complexion from their own, and, least of all, the freedom of settlers owning neither service nor allegiance. Our Indian policy of wardship had led to miserable makeshifts, and this nursing of a red nation within the precincts of a State was one of them. It was like suckling a tiger's whelps in the lion's den. Gold had been discovered in the Cherokee country, and Georgia thirsted to get at it. Collisions occurred very speedily. All white residents in this region were soon ordered to take out a license and swear allegiance to the State. Two white missionaries of the Indian country, among others, refused to comply with the law, because this reservation was a national one. They were tried, convicted, and sentenced to hard labor in the Georgia penitentiary. On a writ of error the Supreme Court pronounced the State law unconstitutional, because it contravened treaties made with the Cherokees by the federal government. Its mandate was sent, ordering the missionaries released. Georgia would not obey, though all persons convicted of illegal residence, twelve in number, were pardoned later on their submission to the State authorities. Jackson, while the contention lasted, would not stir a hand to sustain the mandate of the Supreme Court. "John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it;"* this, if not the precise language, expressed the mood of the Executive, and the most hopeful experiment ever made in civilizing our Indian tribes was doomed by it. Disheartened in their hopeless struggle for equal rights with the white man, the Cherokees joined the dusky herd of children that was being half coaxed, half driven, in these years across the Mississippi, and in the land of the setting sun they relapsed into happier barbarism. Over their deserted farms and habitations crept the wave of white settlement which had been kept back; haughty Georgia took her full scope

1832.

* In 1 Greeley's Recollections, 106, is a story that Jackson used these words.

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of local jurisdiction, and far-off philanthropy, on its haunches, had to be content with a treaty by which our half-converted wards agreed to commute their annuity, and sold out all their rights east of the Mississippi for $5,000,000, to which was added the cost of removing them and settling spoliations, fixed at $600,000 more.* This treaty was ratified about a year after Marshall's death. The Cherokee experiment sinking into the abyss of oblivion, the complex problem of color to agitate Marshall's successor and his associates of the robe was that, not of the red man, but the negro. 1836.

The Presidential election turned out as the people had expected. Van Buren, even on tiptoe, could not approach the stature of Old Hickory; but Jackson fought for him as he did for every man he undertook to promote. "More through the ill will of opponents than the partiality of friends,"† to use his own soft expression, had the little magician become the designated heir; but he had pledged himself, if elected, to tread in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor, and that pledge was enough. Unable to concentrate upon a single candidate, the Whig opposition could not even throw the election into the House, as many, forgetting the moths and candle of 1825, had hoped to do; and the sanguine of this party were disappointed by a result which really was most auspicious for their future hopes. Van Buren, the obsequious, was elected by a majority of forty-six electoral votes over all other candidates, carrying the great Middle States, together with Virginia and most of the South, though falling far behind Jackson's poll of 1832.‡ He came muffled to the very ears in his patron's mantle. William Henry Harrison won seventy-three votes, including those of the great Ohio region, his home, where he was very popular; Hugh L. White, twenty-six votes, Georgia and Tennessee combining 1836.

* 50 Niles, 265; Sumner's Jackson, 183; 1 Benton's View, 624.
† 48 Niles, 257; Van Buren's letter of acceptance.
‡ See Electoral Tables, Appendix.

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in his favor, to Jackson's deep regret; Webster, the fourteen votes of the Bay State, which never idolized him as now; while patrician South Carolina, through the agency of her legislature, again flung away her electoral votes, to compliment ultra southern rights, this time in the person of Mangum, of North Carolina. For Vice-President the whole electoral vote was split up among four candidates, Richard M. Johnson, Francis Granger, John Tyler, and William Smith, of Alabama, and no one had a majority; so the Senate, acting as the constitution prescribes for such a case, selected Johnson, the administration candidate, whose name had stood highest: it was the first instance where such action was necessary. All the men voted for this year, except Webster, belonged to that lesser range of civilians among whom vote-winners are to be found. White and Johnson were kind-hearted men of ripe public experience, but little fruit: the one with flowing white locks, venerable indeed to look upon; the other, an easy-going statesman, who had promoted the abolition of imprisonment for debt, and gained applause latterly for praising the liberty of conscience in a Congressional report which Kendall claimed to have written for him. Harrison, straitened in circumstances, was a modest seeker of small offices, whose measure Adams thought he had taken when he made him minister to the republic of Colombia; and even Van Buren, with all his craft, was a parasite by his own confession. Not until the bugle of younger military exploits was sounded did Harrison sweep the country four years later, and cast into the shade Johnson's rival pretensions as the hero who slew Tecumseh. The President himself was conspicuous in this canvass, roundly abusing former friends who had deserted his party.*

The fashion of catechising Presidential candidates and giving their replies through the press was now coming into vogue. But public inquisitiveness ran just now to lesser points; for, in truth, this canvass presented little but personal preference to quarrel over. The platform of opposi-

* See 51 Niles; newspapers of the day.

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tion was as piebald as its list of candidates. But the late slavery agitation, violent as it was, had no real influence at the polls, for immediate abolition was thought a midsummer madness, soon to disappear. Was not this blessed Union founded on the rock of compromise? So quickly had passed the tremor of the first shock that men in Congress of all sections united, on the very verge of this election, in extending the area of Missouri by a new western boundary, which would give up to slave labor a rich and fertile tract of land equal in extent to one of the flourishing Atlantic States, and this regardless of the solemn compact which had consecrated that tract to freedom.*

In these days all the States but South Carolina chose Presidential electors by general ticket and a popular vote; but there was no uniformity in the day of election. In Ohio and Pennsylvania it was November 4th; in thirteen other States, New York and Virginia among the number, it was the 7th of the month; in Massachusetts and Alabama the 14th, while Tennessee and Rhode Island brought up the rear with the 17th and 23d days respectively. Had the electric telegraph been in use, the evil of this variety would have been still greater. As it was, whenever the national struggle was close the strain of uncertainty became intense, and an earlier State result bore strongly upon a later one, to say nothing of the effect of holding separate elections for the choice of State officers the same year. In 1836 many States cast so close an electoral vote that a small percentage, less in some instances than 300 ballots, was enough to turn the scales; and Van Buren's whole popular vote amounted to less than 25,000 majority, against the solid 157,000 by which the chieftain won four years before. All through November the press and people were kept in feverish suspense, the more so that federal office-holders had been chosen electors in two or three

* See Act June 7, 1836; 1 Benton's View, 626. Benton, who applauded this concession to Missouri, cites this as an instance of the just and fraternal spirit in which the free States acted towards their southern brethren at this time.

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instances contrary to the constitution. Van Buren's electoral vote proved large enough to elect him in spite of irregularities; but the decreasing State majorities were a warning to his party.

Jackson's cup of personal triumph was now full, and adulation brimmed it to overflowing. One dramatic spec-
1836-37. tacle, enacted in the Senate, completed the discomfiture of the men who, under Clay's lead, had opposed him in that chamber. It gladdened the old man's heart and glutted his ire. Ever since Benton, "solitary and alone," had put the ball in motion for expunging from the record that Senate resolution of 1834* which censured the President for removing the deposits, that fanciful idea had been growing into favor with party Democrats. In less than three years a majority of the States had sent out their fiats through the legislature, either by superseding senators when their terms expired who had voted to censure, or by sending peremptory instructions to expunge. Tyler was among the number who had resigned rather than comply with the instructions; while the authors of the censure, Clay, Webster, and Calhoun, though maintained by their constituents, occupied their seats with a following now reduced to a minority, and had to face the ignominy proposed by the party victorious at the polls. In the name of the people, Benton solemnly brought forward "the edict of the people" and demanded its execution.

1837. Jan. 16. Dilatory tactics were used on the other side in vain; an inexorable majority of the Senate sat far into the night to accomplish what they had proposed. After each of the eloquent trio had protested in his distinctive style, the expunging resolution was put to vote and passed.† It was now about midnight. The secretary of the Senate produced the original manuscript journal which contained the vote of condemnation, and, drawing a square of black lines around it, proceeded to write across the face, "Expunged by order of the Senate

* *Supra*, p. 166.

† The vote stood 24 to 19.

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this 16th day of January, 1837."* The chandelier was lit up and the chamber crowded while this strange performance took place; and what was in form an obliteration emblazoned forever a vote of disrespect which might otherwise have been forgotten. Jackson's pleasure at this torturing piece of vindication was so great that he gave a dinner to the expunging senators, leaving a sick-bed to welcome his company.

The hero prepared now to hand over the reins which he had held with such firmness and tenacity, in spite of years and bodily ailments. He received this winter but little company, and attended only a few hours each day to public business. Wondrously successful in achieving all he had planned, he was zealous to leave his administration a finished monument. He meant to complete his whole work, blind, however, to the defects that were in it. His annual message at this session had the valedictory strain; and, father of his party, he emulated the father of his country, in issuing a farewell address to the people,—that pose paternal no other President but Washington had dared to take. Congress grouped to give the closing scene effect, trained by experience with him to take the background, and bring censers instead of censure. Before the red fire lights up the tableau at the slow drop of the curtain, let us turn to a few topics whose development has not been noticed.

Of foreign affairs which occupied his second term, Jackson's imbroglio with France deserves the first mention. Louis Philippe, the citizen king, whose throne was never firm, ruled that country as its constitutional monarch, having one chamber of peers for ornament and another of deputies to exercise the real functions of sovereignty in the name of the people. With this chamber of deputies

* See 1 Benton, 717–731; Debates of Congress. Curiously enough, Benton gives the date of his own resolution inaccurately. The record of censure is to be read on the book under the black lines, almost as plain to-day as it ever was. The States furnish a few precedents for expunging.

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it rested to vote the appropriation needful for fulfilling the French treaty of 1831 with the United States. Upon that treaty, which indemnified our country for Napoleon's spoliations, Jackson had plumed himself justly;* but the settlement was unpopular in France, and the more so, because Rives, our minister, who negotiated it, boasted in some official letter of his feat in adjusting claims which our country had thought desperate. The treaty itself had been duly signed and ratified on the part of France without the concurrence of the deputies; the principle of granting an indemnity was generally admitted, but complaint was made that the award was too large, and that America as an offset owed France an earlier debt of gratitude. One year after the exchange of ratifications the first instalment of indemnity fell due by the terms of the treaty, and our Congress had already yielded by law the tariff concessions for which France stipulated in return. But Rives was back in the United States, leaving vacant our embassy at Paris; and twice already had the French chamber of deputies sat and adjourned since the treaty was consummated, while Philippe's timid cabinet had submitted no bill providing a payment for its action. A few days later, McLane, our Secretary of the Treasury, drew upon the French minister of finance for the instalment overdue, but the draft came back dishonored through the Bank of the United States.† The French chambers, meanwhile, sitting all winter, no bill to appropriate for this first instalment had been introduced till near the close of the session, no one pressed the measure, and the deputies adjourned without action. A short session ending in June was equally fruitless. By autumn, Livingston, our new minister, arrrived at Paris with his letters of credence, and Louis Philippe, receiving him kindly, gave the most positive assurance as a king and

1833. Feb. 2.

Feb. 7.

April.

October.

* *Supra*, vol. iii, p. 504.

† The Bank's claim of damages for non-payment of this draft gave rise to a new quarrel with the President, and the dispute was litigated in the courts. See Sumner's Jackson.

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a gentleman that the treaty would be fulfilled and the appropriation passed when the chambers met again. His pledge he redeemed so far as his own efforts could go; and the bill to carry into effect the treaty with the United States, already twice introduced, was submitted for the third time in the following January, reported formally, and pressed in March to a vote. But that vote, after a debate of several days, resulted in rejecting the bill. The French minister of foreign affairs, the Duc de Broglie, resigned at once, according to parliamentary usage; but patching up this disagreement with the chamber of deputies, the well-meaning king resolved to try his appropriation again at a later session. Assurances of this tenor were sent to the American government; but the French chambers were prorogued to December 29th before the irresolute cabinet could summon the nerve for another contest.

1834. January-March.

April.

At this juncture of affairs Minister Livingston received a secret hint from the throne that something energetic on this subject in President Jackson's next annual message would be of use in toning up the deputies at the proper time; for the French chambers had somehow got the impression that the American government, from its long silence, was either indifferent to the spoliation claims, or conscious of wrong, and that the people of the United States would not back the award. Livingston lost no time in conveying the suggestion; and whether, without receiving this hint at all, or taking it too literally,* Jackson's annual message contained, sure enough, a thundering philippic against France for her delinquency in fulfilling the solemn obligations of a treaty. Urging the United States to take redress into their own hands if the money lawfully due was refused or delayed

December.

* Livingston's published despatch which transmits the king's hint was dated as late as November 22, 1834; while the President's message to Congress was delivered December 1st. See 47 Niles, 417. This point the author has confirmed from the State Department archives. But Livingston had pressed the same point, it would seem, in his earlier despatches, as the context shows. Ib.

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any longer, he asked Congress for authority to make reprisals upon French property unless the French chambers marched up to the measure of their duty. This breezy exposition of the difficulty, in that clear and unmincing style of which Jackson was a master, swept susceptible France like a north wind. The Gallic press and people called for war the instant that message was read, more sensitive, as usual, for honor than to do right. To make the embarrassment more complete of King Philippe and his trembling cabinet, Livingston's despatches, which were sent to Congress presently and printed in the American journals, showed them up as actually conspiring to set this American lion upon their own chamber of deputies, that his roar might frighten them into an appro-

1835. priation. The ministry fell quickly into the popu-

Jan.-Feb. lar mood, eager to wipe out the supposed insult. They recalled Serrurier, the French minister at Washington, offered Livingston his passports, and declared all intercourse with the United States suspended. It was in this warlike crisis that Adams strengthened the Democratic administration by that bold speech, already alluded to,* which worked up our House of Representatives to the pitch of insisting that France should fulfil her solemn en-

March 2. gagements. But our Senate hung back, controlled by the opposition, and distrusting Jackson's fiery and undiplomatic temper; and that body, after committing itself against all immediate preparation for a war with France, dropped the House bill, which appropriated for coast defences, rather than agree to a large outlay at once.† In this dissension of views the Congress expired, only half inclined to stand unflinchingly by the President.

Happily for all, a new turn less belligerent was soon

March 28. given to the imbroglio; for another bill for paying the promised indemnity was favorably reported in the chamber of deputies. France might bluster, but

* *Supra*, p. 188.

† This led to recriminations at the next gathering of Congress between the Executive and the Senate.

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she could not afford to fight for the privilege of a public defaulter. This bill passed late in April, but with the unwelcome condition annexed to it at the last moment, that no money should be paid until "satisfactory explanations" were made of President Jackson's late message. Livingston had deferred his departure to watch this bill; he now declared with becoming warmth that such a condition was inadmissible, and, claiming his passports, he sailed for home. He returned to meet a hearty welcome from his countrymen. And now the French ministry, which had adoped this proviso and the whole sham programme of offended honor, because of sheer weakness with the French people, essayed the unpromising task of forcing a ruler like Jackson to make a bland apology. Some of his own cabinet, as the report goes, and Livingston himself, energized to make our President say just enough for the king to hook upon and pay over the money. The sober net result was seen in the next annual message. Here the President, after a *résumé*, not undignified, of the whole subject, held that an American Executive had the right to lay fearlessly before Congress every year the situation, foreign and domestic, and he positively refused to apologize or to admit the right of France to ask an explanation; but at the same time his argument neatly enclosed a denial that his former message, which had given offence, meant to menace or insult the government of France. That sly disclaimer opened to the Philippe ministry the door of graceful retreat, through which it longed to escape, under the proffered mediation of Great Britain, whose conjunction with France to serve the United States at this time is an astonishing fact in our history. This mediation was promptly accepted by France and the United States; and the President soon had the satisfaction of announcing to the country that France had paid the four instalments promised under the treaty to settle our spoliations, and that the whole controversy had been amicably adjusted. It was a great victory for Jackson, and he deserved the renown of it; for no achievement in foreign diplomacy is,

March–April.

1835. December.

1836. May 10.

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after all, so satisfactory as that which holds a wavering nation to its promises by a little plain speaking. Negotiation's art is to insinuate and charge nothing directly. France was in the wrong of this quarrel from the beginning, our own government forbearing enough; and both Jackson and Adams knew by past experience that, storm though she might, our mercurial ally and earliest friend was not likely to go to war with the United States to save her pride while the French people had a share in the government. Louis Philippe personally was friendly, but he felt his throne tottering under him; and already a bullet would have cut short his career in the midst of this affair had he not been saved by a hidden coat of steel. Knowing something of the United States, whose hospitalities he had enjoyed in earlier days, he admired Jackson, and he admired him the more for the nerve he showed in this entanglement.* Livingston's agency in the affair closed a chequered but honorable career, worthy at last of his illustrious family. He was gathered to his ancestors just as the war-cloud passed by;† and the appointment of Cass, the Secretary of War, tardily, to take his place at Paris, was the final turn that Jackson gave to his kaleidoscope of a cabinet before retiring from office.

1836. May.

That same singular success which had brought our long-sought concessions from England and France into this President's quiver during his first term of office,‡ attended his rule to the close. Denmark, the Sicilies, and Spain settled, like France, with the United States for spoliation claims of long standing; amity, commerce, and navigation were firmly established with Austria, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. Outside of Europe, in the other hemisphere, Morocco, Siam, and Muscat yielded fruit to an energetic diplomacy, founded in justice and friendship; and American commerce, reaping

1829–37.

* 47–49 Niles; Sumner's Jackson; 3 Parton's Jackson.

† Hunt's Livingston, 428.

‡ See vol. iii, pp. 502–504.

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tardy atonement for the outrages of the past, now entered ports hitherto forbidden to it and bore the starry flag into remote seas.

In the western hemisphere other friendly treaties were negotiated with Mexico, Chili, Venezuela, and the Peru-Bolivian confederation. The impulse of the whole civilized world was now to peace, prosperous intercourse, and the extension of commerce to the remotest regions. Of this impulse the United States partook, and though almost the youngest in the family of nations, her rank was among the first, the spectacle of a strong warrior enhancing considerably her estimation in the eyes of mankind. Far different was it with our Spanish-American imitators, born of a race oppressed or oppressing,* who were torn and bleeding with each fresh effort to arrange their incongruous society under written constitutions; whose republics, separate or combined, revolved repeatedly. That idea of a whole western hemisphere blossoming with the fruits of freedom and equality, while the weeds of European influence were kept eradicated,—that sublimest conception of Monroe's administration was already becoming tortured by our ambitious people into a crafty maxim of policy which would make an easier conquest of the continent. The Panama Congress of 1825 and its failure† affected our people with the first nausea of their neighbors. These Spanish-American republics seemed to have no principle of cohesion or confederacy among themselves, but degenerated rapidly into contemptible commonwealths, incapable of living up to the standard of their separate schemes, or to keep their hands from tearing up one constitution and inditing another. Compelled to fight for their civil existence, the people fell under the sway of their generals; and a Spanish-American general, from the atmosphere of plot and counterplot

1829–37.

* Ancient Spain was the Peru and Mexico of the old world; the simple natives had to work in their own mines for the benefit of strangers. 1 Gibbon's Rome, chap. 6.

† Vol. iii, pp. 358–365.

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which constantly enveloped him, was led on by a fatal ambition or distrust to transform himself into president for life, dictator, despot, under the disguise of a patriot. Bolivar himself, of all these epauletted patriots the greatest, was suspected in the last years of his life of intriguing with European powers for a crown; and in less than four years from his death his hopeful republic of Co-
1834. lombia had dissolved and its very name was extinct. In the more remote parts of South America the same want of cohesion and internal stability was felt, and when our sinewy President, baring his arm in the interest of the seal fisheries about Cape Horn, sent a naval force and broke up a settlement at the Falkland Islands which Buenos Ayres had established under the protection of her weaker flag, that republic could only pout and withdraw. North of the Panama isthmus, Central America, whose soil offered the site of a ship canal already projected for connecting two oceans, was torn by internal commotions. Mexico, in fine, the nearest to us of this lacerated sisterhood, showed the same feeble tendency to petty revolution, and between liberal and reactionary parties, Cæsarism and priestcraft, was sorely smitten.

What with their earthquakes and volcanic politics, our people had sickened of these neighboring republics to which at first we were so sentimentally disposed. Their inability to live and thrive by themselves was ominous of their future. Complexion, once more, was against them; they were not pure white men's republics. In our United States, on the other hand, the satanic spirit of manifest destiny was already alluring us on, and weakness all about us whetted the appetite to expand our domains. President Adams, the younger, had opened new veins of commercial intercourse in this western continent, and under his successor the same policy had made progress; but in procuring such facilities England was not behindhand. Race antipathy, in dealing with southern republics like Hayti, put us at further disadvantage with other nations of Europe. So much for intercourse conducted on frank and equal terms. But when the wolf looked down on the

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distant plain with glittering eyes he felt the fold his own. Was the Roman emblem, deceitfully wrapped in shining fleece, to become that of this eagle-beaked republic? And was the Roman presage ours, that the boundaries of the Union would advance and never recede?

A dark chapter opens in our national history,—the first in a foreign system of policy hitherto untried, and of tremendous import. Andrew Jackson was its author. Forcible annexation was this policy; its specific achievement the annexation of Texas; an annexation by conquest and costly war, whose train of consequences soon brought the overthrow of that very social system for whose preservation it was chiefly contrived. This annexation, or "re-annexation" (the lying catch-phrase of the day), comprised not Texas alone in its present autonomy as a province of Mexico, nor even Spanish Texas, if we choose to call it so, with a pretentious boundary at the Rio Grande, but a Texas fraudulently pieced out by other territory wrested from the Mexican republic by a line running to the Pacific Ocean south of California which would secure to us the bay of San Francisco. We will not discuss the advantages of this territorial addition to the Union as they now exist, nor as they might have been, had the luscious fruit been legally acquired. It was the South that had coveted; it was the prudent Monroe, a southerner himself who had forborne for the sake of sectional harmony, who, in 1820, had purchased the Floridas from Spain with the Sabine river for a western boundary, and cut slavery's area south of the Missouri compromise line down to the smallest limits. In that generous concession to northern disquiet, Jackson and Calhoun then acquiesced, and so did Adams, who, of all Monroe's advisers, was the most anxious to press to the Rio Grande.* But if Texas might then have been fairly acquired from Spain by purchase, that opportunity never returned after Texas belonged to independent Mexico. Through toil and tribulation, while

1820.

* Vol. iii, pp. 96, 177.

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overwhelmed by violence and corruption, the Mexican republic remained clear on one maxim, never willingly to be dismembered in any part of her dominions. This maxim she might have fortified from our example.

It was 1823 when the Mexican Congress began its sessions and this new sister republic unfurled her national ensign. Green, white, and red were the colors; an eagle tearing a snake, the national emblem. A snake strangling an eagle would have been the more appropriate; for the Mexican bird of freedom, enfeebled by intestine strife, tried in vain to soar to the lofty perch of its proud neighbor. The written charter of the Anglo-Americans Mexico had copied for her own people without taking their measure; and no government is a ready-made garment which fits all shoulders alike. The American people looked upon Mexico with contempt. Contempt breeds rapine where interest propels, and the United States felt presently a strong interest in the ambition of the South to extend the belt of slavery. Nature and the compromise parallel hemmed in that section; cotton culture was becoming profitable, and to that culture, in the false logic of the day, the slave was thought essential. There was, furthermore, the instinctive rivalry between slavery and freedom. Union or disunion was a secondary consideration; perpetual slavery was the first, and slavery's march must be across the Sabine. Thomas Ritchie, of Virginia, had, as early as 1820, pointed to the South for their acquisition the fair domain of Texas; and Louisiana had steadily deplored that the treaty for the Floridas did not push the boundary so as to take in that province. Adams himself, when President, or Clay rather, his Secretary of State, proposed in 1827 a peaceful purchase of Texas to the Rio Grande, or else the Colorado, but Poinsett, our resident minister, did not make the offer, knowing that it would only irritate Mexico, and be surely rejected.* In fine, our very first treaty

1823.

1820.

1827.

* See 11 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 348; 8 H. H. Bancroft's History, chap. 13; 2 Tyler's Tyler; Docs. 25th Congress, Ex. 42.

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arranged by Clay with the Mexican republic confirmed the Sabine River at the east of Texas as the true dividing line.* 1828–31.

The vigilant Jackson, during his first Presidential term, negotiated with Mexico for amity, commerce, and navigation.† But he soon saw that the southern bent was for territorial extension, and all the more eagerly now that the northern abolition movement and British emancipation in the West Indies showed that there was danger of a conscience crusade against the very heart of their social system. Jackson, like his latest Secretary of State, Forsyth, was a southerner, and his pulse beat in unison with the men of his own section. As defender of the Union, he meant to keep freedom and slavery in an equilibrium, and firmly clamped together. When the abolitionists raised their cry, therefore, he was quick to take the alarm, and throw up the breastworks to protect the slaveholders. On this line of policy southern unionists and nullifiers came together, wide though they might be as the poles in ulterior plans. Texas annexation has claimed, therefore, both Jackson and Calhoun for the progenitor; the one, we may presume, having rather that perpetual compromise and equipoise of sections in view with which patriots so long identified their glorious Union, the other cherishing darker and more insidious designs. The initiation of the scheme devolved, however, upon Jackson, an Executive, as we have seen, not scrupulous in methods, nor considerate to those of a weaker race when they stood in the way of his wishes. As a soldier, he had shown his contempt for the Spanish character. Already following in Clay's footsteps, Van Buren had by 1829 raised the offer for Texas from $1,000,000‡ to $5,000,000; and in August, 1835, Forsyth broached a new and broader proposal to Mexico, so as to take in the Rio Grande up to 1829–35.

* 8 U. S. Statutes at Large, 376.

† Ib. *supra*, p. 245. This league was ratified in 1832.

‡ This was Clay's proposal in case of a line at the Rio Grande.

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the 37th parallel, thence running the boundary on that line to the Pacific.* This meant that the President wished to annex Texas and California to the United States. It was a useless negotiation. All overtures for peaceful acquisition failed. Mexicans were more and more resolved not to consent to amputation for the benefit of the United States, and our pertinacity only inflamed their jealous suspicion. As Santa Anna declared, it would be like signing the death-warrant of his country, for the United States would take one province after another until they had them all.†

But other plans had been maturing to bring Texas into the American Union by the covert process of colonization. Almost insensibly this process had gone on for many years, Mexico, by her own heedless acts, assisting it. Twice did
1819–21. James Long, a Tennesseean, in the years 1819–21, invade Texas and stir its citizens to defy that treaty which kept them out of the Union, and to declare their independence. Both invasions failed; but a large body of American colonists from the region in and about Louisiana settled presently near the Brazos and Colorado rivers, as they were permitted to do under a Mexican
1827. grant to the Austin family. By 1827 Texas contained a large population which in manners, language, and religion were neither Spanish nor Mexican, but slaveholding American; so that when President Guerrero,
1829. of Mexico, proclaimed the abolition of slavery throughout the entire republic, this humane decree was in Texas utterly ignored. Of Mexican emancipation, a policy initiated in 1824, Texas and Coahuila, now united, were the only States of that whole jurisdiction to com-
1829–30. plain. Lundy, the philanthropist, a citizen of the United States well-informed about this region, in which he had once hoped to colonize free negroes, sounded at once an alarm of the plot which was hatching to wrest Texas from Mexico "for the purpose of adding five or six

* 25th Congress, Ex. Doc. 42.

† Thompson's Recollections, 238, 239.

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more slaveholding States to this Union."* Mexico felt the same alarm, and, by a law of 1830, forbade Americans to settle in her border States; inflicting at the same time upon these inhabitants a series of petty exactions and annoyances which served simply to make Texas more rebellious than ever and bring her own authority into contempt.†

It is at this point that the Jackson administration lays itself open to strong suspicions of perfidy. Sam Houston, Jackson's late fellow-soldier, who from governor of Tennessee had sunk suddenly into a social outcast, resigning his office, and abandoning his home and family to dwell among the Cherokee Indians, turned up at Washington as a toper in search of some Indian contract. Here he gained a moment's notoriety by thrashing a member of the House, and receiving the Speaker's reprimand for it, being fined in the police court besides. Jackson, by way of befriending an old acquaintance and comrade in distress, got Houston off to Texas, whither he had proposed going, and in the event started him on a new road to glory and renown. Revolution was in Houston's mind, as Jackson well knew, and the two Tennesseeans seem to have concerted a plan together for bringing Texas into the Union.‡ Soon after Houston's arrival, Texas, complaining of oppression, her pretended citizens flew to arms, took steps for dismemberment, and presently a provisional government was established at Austin, with Hous-

1832.

1833.

* 1 Garrison's Life, 153.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft's History, chap. 7.

‡ 42 Niles, April, 1832; 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, *passim*. We have adopted the view of John Quincy Adams, who studied the Texas question very deeply, though not dispassionately. He boldly charged President Jackson with duplicity in this affair. See 63 Niles, 137; Dr. Mayo's book, cited in 9 Adams's Diary, 430. Houston appears to have boasted to a friend, December, 1832, that he would yet be President of Texas, and bring that province into the United States; 28 Century Mag., 494. Wise (Decades, 149), who is better authority on this point than some others to which his book relates, says positively that Jackson used Houston to carry out a revolution. And see Sumner's Jackson, 354; 3 Parton's Jackson; 1 Benton, 667.

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ton for commander-in-chief. Houston called for volunteers
1835. from the United States to aid in putting down the "Mexican usurper," promising large bounties.* The Mexican usurper, or rather the latest chieftain who had risen to authority in that turbulent republic, was Santa Anna, the "maimed hero," as he was styled from some early mishap which had cost him a leg. Crafty, unprincipled, and avaricious, he was true, in the main, to his country. Through much vicissitude this man continued the chief figure on the Mexican side through the whole drama of conquest, upon which the curtain now rose. Our slaveholding sympathizers had sent to Texas money, arms, and supplies, and New Orleans was a rendezvous where men were openly enlisted for Houston's
1836. army. Early in 1836 Santa Anna entered the revolted State at the head of an armed force of Mexicans, and warlike manifestoes were issued on both sides; patriots, however, fought at advantage on their own soil, the Mexicans having been drawn far from a proper base. Texas, in convention about the same time, declared its independence, plagiarizing from Jefferson, but without
March 2-17. asserting the doubted dogma that "all men are created equal." A constitution followed, framing a republican government after the latest southern pattern, with slavery reinstated beyond the recall of any legislature, the right of individual emancipation and of free colored immigration curtailed, and all admission of slaves into the new republic forever forbidden, except from the United States. The world's repulsion of the African slave-trade was a bait, in short, for our planter, who might, furthermore, come in with his slaves and become a citizen after six months' residence.† The strange convention ad-
April 21. journed, and in less than five weeks followed the battle of San Jacinto, in which Houston and his revolutionists routed the Mexican force sent to subdue

* 49 Niles.

† 50 Niles, 99, 185, 206. It is needless to add that most of the signers of this constitution were from the east of the Sabine.

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them. At an earlier fight at the Alamo, where fell our eccentric Crockett, Santa Anna had been cruel; and "Remember the Alamo!" was the watchword. The Mexicans were shot down, dispersed, and Santa Anna himself, captured in his flight the day after the battle, might have met death at the victors' hands had he not promptly consented to an armistice the most liberal possible, and encouraged them to hope that he would arrange with the United States for their full independence of Mexico.*

The Mexican commander was not a man to be depended on. Released from confinement, he took his route to Vera Cruz by way of Washington city. Our government, in the mean time, when reproached by Mexico with the open violation of neutrality involved in the enlistments at New Orleans, had blandly disclaimed responsibility, calling this the conduct of individuals whom it could not control.† Not one of the invading expeditions to Texas had been prevented; in fact, while Houston was calling for recruits from the United States, Secretary Forsyth opened his bid for dismemberment, urging the Mexican government not only to make a cession of Texas, as before, but to sell out all the territory of that republic lying north of the thirty-seventh parallel besides; for San Francisco bay, as he bluntly stated, the President thought most desirable for our own commerce.‡ And after the San Jacinto victory our President helped Houston's strategy by posting General Gaines with an American force between the Sabine and Neuces rivers under a pretence of preventing Texas Indians from invading the soil of the United States. It was the Florida trick over again, conceived by the same brain, and played by one of the same agents.§ This latter breach of faith to Mexico was so flagrant that when the Mexican minister at Washington had demanded his passports, and left on finding

1835.

1836. June-Nov.

* 50 Niles.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 7.

‡ Despatch, August 6, 1835; Docs. 25th Congress, 1st Session.

§ See vol. iii, p. 68.

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remonstrance in vain, Jackson recalled the troops in deference to our popular expression, and employed the more convenient weapon of spoliation claims. These claims were used against Mexico both as an offset to whatever grievances she might allege on her part, and to found a basis for coercing her into a cession of some kind in the near future.* Some of these claims were genuine, but more were trumped up; some hardly touched American interests at all, others concerned spoliations which Spain had committed before Mexico became independent; others, in fine, were for a court to determine. As for evidence to sustain these claims, Forsyth instructed our minister at Mexico to make a peremptory demand and promised to look up his proofs afterwards.†

July.

The news of Houston's victory at San Jacinto reached Washington while Congress was in session. There was great enthusiasm over it. The spirit was abroad through the whole valley of the southern Mississippi to march on to Texas;‡ and Congress at once espoused the patriots, though the session had begun with perfunctory professions of neutrality as between the belligerents. Viewing the present struggle in the light of its own merits, both Houses voted separately before adjournment, and the Senate unanimously, that the independence of Texas ought to be acknowledged whenever she had proved herself capable of maintaining a competent civil government. Calhoun would have gone farther than this: the recognition of Texan independence and the simultaneous admission of Texas into the Union was the platform on which he had planted himself already.§

1836. June.

July.

The events of the intermission and the sober second thought made the North uneasy over this business. The suspicion grew there and abroad that, under all this fervor

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 7.

† See the list of the Mexican claims in 8 H. H. Bancroft, 309.

‡ Judge Catron's letter in 1 Webster's Correspondence, 523.

§ Debates of Congress, 1836.

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for "God and liberty" some subtle intrigue was hidden for annexing more slave territory to the Union. Independent Texas was not slow in making her own wishes known on this subject. It was to allay these increasing fears that Jackson ordered Gaines back to American soil, and met Congress when it reassembled with soothing explanations. One would have thought from the President's official language that we now were aggrieved by the departure of the Mexican minister in such high dudgeon; and the message flung out satirically at those who, "indifferent to principle themselves, and prone to suspect the want of it in others, charge us with ambitious designs and insidious policy." Pleased, for his own part, that Texas should wish to join our federal system, this must be, he cautiously added, a work of time and dependent on delicate interests.* Still more judicial was the tone of his special message to Congress this same month, which communicated the report of a secret agent whom he had despatched to Texas to look into its condition; and the North breathed freely once more to find the Union's champion indisposed even to recognize the independence of Texas at this time, because it would be an act unjust to Mexico.† And yet, at the moment of these reassuring professions, Jackson and his cabinet were trying their best to crowd Mexico to the wall between preposterous claims for spoliation and the influence of Santa Anna. The liberated chief of the Mexican forces visited our capital this self-same winter. Mexico, however, had already repudiated him, discredited his embassy in the most emphatic terms, and chosen another President in his place; little, therefore, could be made of him, and Santa Anna, besides, was too wily to help his enemies after he was safely out of their hands. The claims were our main reliance. Over these Jackson forced a rupture with Mexico, and less than two months after he had spoken so gently of the sister republic sent to Congress a wrathful message, asking for authority to make reprisals and de-

December.

1836–37.

1837. February.

* Message December 6, 1836. † Message December 22, 1836.

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spatch a squadron to the gulf, unless Mexico at once adjusted her dues with the United States. He must have overlooked the clause of his own recent treaty with that power, which provided that there should be neither reprisal nor a declaration of war on either side before the offended nation had stated its claims, verified them by competent proof, and waited reasonably long after a demand of satisfaction.* An echo of the President's thunder came from the foreign relations' committee of the House; though instead of reprisal and war, a resolution for the immediate acknowledgment of Texas was reported. This was the sort of vengeance on Mexico southerners had been looking for. But, knowing the sensitiveness of the North, the House showed the resolution no favor. Other propositions from southern members were rejected; but at the last hour of the session a clause was hurriedly wedged into the civil appropriation bill, which passed both Houses. That clause appropriated for the outfit and salary of a diplomatic agent from this country to the republic of Texas whenever the President should receive satisfactory evidence that Texas was an independent power and deem it expedient to appoint such a minister.† Might not the whole Union repose upon an Executive assurance, scarcely two months old, that Texas recognition must wait? Events had not moved since then. And would not Jackson pass the whole subject over to his northern successor, who was waiting to be installed? No; turning what might seem contrived for a prospective provision into a present one, and taking the very step to which the House had just refused a precipitate sanction, our headstrong President signed the bill which contained this item on the last day of Congress and of his official term, and quick as a flash sent to the Senate his nomination of a Texan minister. In this appointment the Senate concurred, and

* See 8 U. S. Statutes, p. 426; treaty of 1831 with Mexico, art. 34.

† Act of March 3, 1837, 5 U. S. Statutes, 170. Waddy Thompson, of South Carolina, afterwards sent out as our minister to Mexico, got this pregnant clause into the appropriation bill.

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by the clever ruse northern sentiment was circumvented and Texas recognized by the United States as an independent power.* Having brought the Texan enterprise to this point by committing his successor, Jackson turned the business over, as events compelled him to, but he watched the annexation scheme like a tender plant, after he had cast off the robes of office.†

Thus stood our foreign relations when Jackson retired. This narrative must not close without recurring to the financial condition of the country, fast hurrying to a disastrous climax. The first panic subsiding which followed upon the removal of the deposits from the United States Bank, confidence succeeded, soon to be blown up into the thinnest bladder of wild credulity. During the last months of 1835, and through the succeeding year, which was one of prosperous activity, the mercantile pulse rose to a higher and higher degree, its beatings responding to the healthful growth and activity of a nation freed from debt, yet quickened feverishly by the quack nostrums to which our national system was a stranger. That salutary check of a general regulator in finance to

1835–36.

* Prudence and disinterested honor dictated a neutral attitude on the part of the United States until Mexico or some other foreign power should first recognize the independence of Texas, or at least, to quote Jackson himself, "until the lapse of time or the course of events should have proved beyond all cavil or dispute the ability of the people of that country to maintain their separate sovereignty and to uphold the government established by them." President's special message, December 22, 1836.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13; 63 Niles, 137. The Senate, whose opinion differed somewhat from that of the popular branch, had drawn out this nomination by agreeing, March 1, 1837, to a resolve for the immediate recognition of Texas. This was passed by 23 to 19; and the next day its reconsideration was refused by a tie vote, 24 to 24. See Debates of Congress, 1836–37. It would seem, from various indications, that the southern annexationists in Congress feared to trust the preliminary question to the northern successor of Jackson, whose own State was suspicious and restive; and that, upon some understanding with the Executive, they outgeneralled the House, and carried the point they had first in view.

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supply the people with safe exchanges and a sound currency, and to check excessive issues by the mushroom banks of independent States, disappeared when the angry axe laid low our National Bank. The monarch of the monetary world made way for a scrub growth of sapling banks which sprang up about its stump, having restless sap, but little root. Each bull-frog institution strained in imitation to swell to the size of the ox. A strong pressure for charters upon the legislatures of States already well supplied was the first symptom of the infatuation which had newly set in; for within two years from the transfer of the public moneys new State banks had been created which represented more than $80,000,000 of paper capital, and still the appetite for them increased. Small towns wanted banks chartered for $1,000,000, and even sober Boston had its project for a new $10,000,000 bank, which the legislature finally quashed. Indeed, in place of the monster which Jackson slew with his club an army of monsters sprang up as in the field sown with the dragon's teeth. The paper of such banks was pressed out in every direction, and for their loan and credit no feverish enterprise seemed too fanatical. The prophet's gourd was to grow on forever. The folly was not confined to new and ignorant States. Banks in a State like New York extended their facilities from thirty to fifty per cent. beyond what their charters permitted. To get into the upper circle of the Democratic magnates and handle the public deposits was the ruling ambition. The tidal wave of inflation, which by 1836 had easily effaced the depression of the year before, took trade off its feet and carried it floating upon the topmost crest of speculation. Stocks now rose to prices before unheard of; flour in the New York market ran suddenly from $5 to $7 a barrel, and then soared higher; other needful commodities advanced in proportion; new companies, which had been organized for a variety of purposes adapted to the new development of business, put out their prospectuses and scooped a fortune out of their expectations. Much of the present speculation rushed, as speculation always will,

1835. October.

1836.

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to real estate as a tangible investment. The receipts from public land sales by the United States, which had crept by 1834 to a standard not much beyond $4,850,000, tripled those figures in 1835, and the next year multiplied them fully fivefold. In private tracts of land the craze corresponded, not in the new Western country alone, but toward the remote East,—among Maine's titled forests. The rustic burgh, which had taken its little leap with the rest, was imagined a great city. On the diagram might be seen its broad avenue, flanked by imposing dwellings and public edifices; its wild lands were parcelled into farms, and its farms mapped out into building lots, all selling by the square foot where they had sold by the acre, and all bringing handsome prices, though rarely from the settlers intended to remain there. These new settlers somehow gave a deceptive show of numerical grandeur by going to and fro, up and down, and in and out, like a theatrical army. There was a new phenomenon of travel; for railways and canals were now building rapidly, and the abridgment of time and space brought out new centres of trade and travel, and opened up new inns and accommodations. Business increased transportation, transportation increased business, and in the sensation of a new life, so different from the quiet humdrum of old, it seemed as if all things were moving and growing.* 1835–37.

Our federal head, though clear from the giddiness of this money-making delirium, was ignorant of its cause, and resorted to empirical treatment of the symptoms. The blame for all this frenzy was laid to the Bank and the money-power; and not a coil of the old dragon could be uplifted that the President did not bring down his bludgeon for a blow, resolved that die it must. In his last annual message to Congress he denounced as a fraud on the country, as indeed it was, the reissue of its old notes, which the Biddle directory had lately attempted under the new charter they had procured from Pennsylvania.† Deter-

* 490, 50 Niles; newspapers of the day.

† Message of December 6, 1836.

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mined that the national currency should owe nothing, at all events, to this institution, Jackson tried, and tried honestly, to give to the people something in place of the convenient medium they had lost. His early effort to bring gold and silver into circulation,* of which we have spoken, deserved a better triumph than it won. In aid of such a policy many of the loco-foco States forbade their own local banks to issue bills of a smaller amount than five dollars.† But strict views of the federal power being now in vogue, Congress claimed to exert no direct power over local banks or their currency, so that this State prohibition proved but a spoonful of remedy. Ten-dollar notes drove out the gold eagles, five-dollar notes the half-eagles; and wherever depreciated paper dollars might circulate at all, the metallic substitute vanished. The immense volume of bank paper, good and bad, swelled, in fact, faster than gold could be coined to supply its place; and to clog this experiment more heavily, the mint law of 1834, through some oversight in framing it, made a new gold dollar worth slightly less than an old silver one, so that bullion brokers in consequence exchanged silver for gold wherever they could, and sent the former metal out of the country at a time when it could least be spared. Jackson himself had to acknowledge that his gold currency was not an accomplished fact. Little more, indeed, had it amounted to than to jingle out a party success in the canvass of '34, and give a hard-money plank for Democratic platforms of the future.‡ The true national currency needful was a paper currency worthy to circulate, and with metal enough on hand to redeem the notes on presentation.

1834.

Financial expedients, excellent to declaim about, will, many of them, fail at the crucial test, because of some

* *Supra*, p. 173.

† In 50 Niles, 80, thirteen States are enumerated, inclusive of New York and Pennsylvania, which by October, 1836, had taken such action.

‡ See 46 Niles; Sumner's Jackson.

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element in the social situation hidden and uncontrolled. Appalled by the rapid expansion of traffic, by the madness which foretold some dangerous catastrophe, our ruler, in a cold sweat, grasped at the only weapon left in his little armory of resources, that, namely, of forbidding this local bank paper to be taken for the public revenue or one branch of it. Customs receipts had been in National Bank notes, as well as coin, and other bank notes were now accepted; public lands sold, too, for local currency; and on public lands the real-estate craze fastened the readier, because these might be bought at $1.25 the acre wherever located, while all private prices varied by the owner's fancy. At the West bank paper abounded, but very little specie, and it was not an uncommon device for land speculators to organize a bank expressly and procure a charter in order to help work out their schemes. Benton, the watch-dog of these public domains, saw as did few others the impending crash, having entered public life in the distress of 1819–20, and retaining what few statesmen possess who wait on popular omens, a vivid memory. He offered in the Senate, at its first session, a resolution declaring that nothing but gold and silver ought to be received in payment for the public lands. The measure interested no one but himself, and it was rejected. But, as had before happened, what Congress would not do the President did on his own responsibility. Impressed by Benton's warning, Jackson summoned his cabinet for advice, found their advice unfavorable, and, precisely as in 1833, took his own course. In one week after Congress had adjourned Secretary Woodbury issued a Treasury circular, drafted by Benton (so that senator asserts), which directed that nothing but gold and silver should be received in payment of the public lands. This was the famous "specie circular" of which Jackson boasted as a last financial exploit. It discriminated against paper in one branch of the national revenue. Jackson expected too much from such a specific. Had his government confided the metallic proceeds to its separate vaults, instead of the private pet depositories, the public hoard

1836. April 22.

July 11.

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would have been safe in the general calamity which was sure to follow very speedily. But in reality the effect of this circular was to divert the flow of the precious metals from their natural channels and bring on a catastrophe, sure, though slower, involving government and the individual together. This circular, it has well been said, was the spark which lighted the combustibles, but not the cause of the disaster.*

Speculation grew wilder with Jackson's last year of office, and signs of a coming revulsion appeared in the winter, though few took heed of them. This specie circular, while checking the fever at a single point, could not expel it from the system of the body politic. Credit set up for a miracle-worker. Speculation abroad had its own course to run, which enhanced the danger. And here at home even our pet deposit banks had to surrender a great part of the national surplus on the first day of the new year, to be swallowed into the belly of State projects which gaped wide for the dividend declared by Congress. The scarcity of metallic money forced up the current rates of interest so high that citizens would pay two per cent. a month or more to carry schemes from which they hoped very shortly to realize fifty or a hundred per cent. Now might be heard ominous mutterings from the people. The laborer found his peck of meal and basket of coal going upward in price, while the rag money which paid his week's toil was the same as before. These were the experimental days for corporate organization; in manufactures, in railroad and canal building, in various great enterprises, besides banking, chartered companies had begun to supplant the partnerships and individual modes of business hitherto almost universal; and these money corporations, with their maximum of wealth and power and minimum of responsibility, were already widening the chasm

1836-37.

1837. January.

* Sumner's Jackson, 336. A similar circular was once issued by Jackson's predecessor, which appears to have escaped general notice. 7 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 427.

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between capital and labor; for thus did impersonal mechanism supersede that human sympathy and intercourse which nature craves for employers and employed. Strikes were noticeable of late in large northern cities, and a tendency among mechanics to form protective combinations,—a phenomenon so strange in America that a trades-union of journeymen tailors was judicially pronounced a European notion, something needless in this country and incompatible with free institutions.* Other sufferings touched the poor. New York city, whose brick parallels extended rapidly up the peninsula while the flush of inflation was felt, heard the clang of the fire-bell on the bitterest of cold December nights in 1835, when the thermometer stood at zero and the wind was fiercely blowing from the northwest. Daylight found the firemen still fighting the flames, exhausted and almost perishing, when a new fire broke out in the heart of the business quarters near Wall and Pearl streets, and this raged for fifteen hours or more over the richest area in the city, licking up huge cargoes of merchandise to the very wharves, and consuming thirteen acres of costly stores, churches, and public edifices,—nearly seven hundred buildings,—worth in the aggregate some twenty million dollars. Fire-engines were almost useless, the water which could scarcely be forced up from the river, the only source of supply, freezing in the hose; nor could the flames be finally stayed until buildings were blown up by gunpowder. Copper roofs melted in the intense heat of the conflagration, and marble buildings, thought fire-proof, were laid in ashes.† Nobly did the resolute citizens face this calamity; but private distress increased among the poorer classes an irritable tendency. Laborers and the unemployed showed the mob spirit a year later, when speculation put on its last screws. One February afternoon, a public meeting was held at the park to protest against the high rents which people had

1836. April–June.

1835. Dec. 15–16.

* 50 Niles, 295.

† 49 Niles; New York newspapers; Lamb's History of New York.

to pay, and the starvation prices of their bread and fuel. Inflammatory placards had been posted about the city. An immense crowd in front of the City Hall, after listening to the heated harangues of demagogue politicians, were worked up to spoil and outrage. Flour by this time had risen to twelve dollars a barrel, and certain dealers were pointedly accused of buying up the market for a speculation. On a hint from one of their most passionate orators the crowd moved to the brick warehouse of a flour merchant in a neighboring street. His strong portals, which he had closed in defence, they forced open by a vigorous assault. An iron door was torn from its hinges, and in rushed the rioters to take possession, tumbling out sacks and barrels of flour into the street from every door and window; these burst as they fell, or were ripped open and staved in by the outside multitude. Old crones darted forward like birds of prey, and, filling baskets and aprons from the soft drift which lay knee-deep on the pavement whiter than snow-flakes, made off for their homes. The stores of other dealers were plundered in the same manner, and of more than five hundred barrels of flour and a thousand bushels of wheat, thus wantonly destroyed, the greater part was wasted. The mayor's mild remonstrance had not checked a crowd which was set on to pillage before his very windows, and, as in earlier riots, the police had to be reinforced by the citizen militia. Night saw our democratic metropolis patrolled by troops like some beleaguered city, their arms glittering in the moonbeams.*

1837. Feb.–March.

All the while the President and his flatterers had ignorantly laid this feverish rise of prices to a sort of brokers' conspiracy, and foretold the happy consequences that would follow from the specie circular. By this contrivance the speculators and inflators would surely be baffled. A sound had gone up against this circular, and they supposed it the

* See 51 Niles, 400, 403; New York newspapers.

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voice of the enraged money-makers. But in Congress even party friends thought differently. To allay the mercantile discontent with this last official ukase a bill passed both Houses at this second session to rescind the specie circular. Rather than provoke an issue, however, with the man of the people, or jar upon the dulcet strain which suited these last hours, the act was moulded finally into a mild and equivocal expression. Not even at the last moment was this President to be wheedled out of his purpose by a piece of sycophancy. He prevented the bill from becoming a law by keeping it in his hands until after the Congress had expired; and the complex and uncertain phrase of this bill, as he announced through the press, was his reason for doing so.* This pocket veto, with its grimly humorous explanation, was the last act of an administration safely wilful beyond all others in our annals. By this time the spark which lighted the fuse had crept up close to the magazine, but not near enough yet to produce the disastrous explosion or disturb the perfect complacency with which our old hero laid down his rod of office.

1836–37.

March 2.

Large space has been given in our narrative to Andrew Jackson's administration, because of its strong idiosyncrasies and the character of the national events it served to develop. He has left a landmark in our annals for all time. Much is said of the influence of ideas in producing history, but the really controlling influence of this epoch was that of personal example. And never did popular parties opposed to one another respond to personal guidance so heartily as those which now grew up under the leadership of those fierce combatants, always at variance with one another, Clay and Jackson; the one combining popular elements too intelligent and opinionated not to show signs of jealous dissension, the other having a blind democracy for a nucleus so dense, so devoted, and withal so carefully disciplined, that rivalry was kept low and political mutiny

* See 2 Statesman's Manual; 52 Niles, 26.

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punishable as though by martial law. Strong in all his traits of character, his vices as well as his virtues, Jackson's public example was one for positive good and positive evil,—a mixture of brass and clay. There could be nothing negative about him. What he purposed, that he put his hand to and bore it safely through. His mind moved rapidly, and with an almost lightning-like perception he had resolved the point while others were deliberating; and right or wrong, he was tenacious of his conclusion, and fought to have his way like one who felt it shame not to win. There was no twilight of dubiety about him; he knew, and knew earnestly; and within the steel horizon which bounded his vision he could pierce to the circumference in all directions. As his intellect admitted of no half-truth, so did his nature revolt at bargains and compromises, such as Clay, his mortal enemy, was an adept in arranging; but with him it was to conquer or die on every occasion, win a clean victory or endure a clean defeat. This temper, as those who knew him best have admitted, gave him a load to carry all his life;* every step he took was a contest, and yet, if ever mortal may be said to have triumphed in what he undertook, every contest was a victory. Jackson could not live without a quarrel; and, though capable of strong and lasting attachment, friends and enemies often changed places as his ambition developed, and no one could remain long in his confidence who did not humor his foibles and bend to his purpose.† Conscientious difference of opinion he knew not how to tolerate, and friendship that was not all in all was not at

* 1 Benton's View, 738.

† Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Calhoun, White, all had contributed to Jackson's singular rise and aspirations. Towards President Monroe Jackson showed symptoms of dislike and even treachery after entering the lists for the successorship, and the others he treated in turn as bitter enemies. Benton, on the contrary, once engaged with him in deadly feud, and Kendall, a former opponent, came into his path and became two of the most influential of his Presidential advisers. Blair was brought to his acquaintance as a stranger whose pen could serve him.

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all. Gratitude implied a self-abasement, and he felt it for no one; even coequal companionship was something of a yoke to him; it was admiring devotion that won his heart, and the better angel of his nature was compassion. But though knightly towards women, tender to children, the young, the gentle, the fallen, to all who nestled up confidingly, his contempt for weakness disposed him to snatch whatever he wanted, regardless of others' rights. He could bully a sister republic to get her territory, and drive the half-tamed Indian from his homestead and the white man's neighborhood at the point of the bayonet, and all this with hardly the pretence of compunction. Frank and sincere in the main, and wishing to be thought so whatever ill might be imputed to him, of manners cordial and graceful, he was a generous host at home, and after his own ideal a southern gentleman. Yet for all this he had something of the borderer's fierce disposition; with the men among whom he had been born and bred might made right, and honor was vindicated by a brace of pistols at ten paces. Such a citizen could never have been exalted to national distinction in the courtlier age of the republic, and his fame waited long for civil recognition, even after his military success. Springing up out-of-doors and in the free sunshine, rough contact with mankind in a pioneer society gave him an education; and as a slaveholder, long used to an easy independence and to being waited upon, he acquired that self-confidence in later life without which consciousness of merit must fail of renown. As chief magistrate he was an innovation upon American life, a novelty,—in some sense a protest against the past. He was the first great product of the West, humanly speaking, Clay only excepted, whose genius partook more of Eastern example. He was the first President of this Union chosen from the west of the Alleghanies and a pioneer State; the first ever borne into the chair with a general hurrah and no real sense of civil superiority for the office. He was the first President from what we call the masses; the first whose following vulgarized, so to speak, the national administration and social life at the

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capital. Old age and debility had much to do with the venerating applause which constantly followed him, and forced even his whims to be respected; the people seemed anxious to make amends for so long neglecting to advance him.

Jackson ruled by his indomitable force of will, his tenacity of purpose, courage, and energy. He did not investigate nor lean upon advice, but made up his mind by whatever strange and crooked channels came his information, and then took the responsibility. Experience made him rapid rather than rash, though he was always impulsive; and he would despatch the business which engaged his thoughts, and that most thoroughly. Though stretched on the bed of sickness, he held the thread of his purpose, where none could take it from him; his will rallied and beat under the body. He decided affairs quickly, and upon impulse more than reflection; but his intuitions were keen, often profound, in politics as well as war. His vigor as an Executive at his time of life was truly wonderful. He left nothing in affairs for others to finish, betrayed no sign of fear or timidity, shrank from no burden however momentous, but marched to the muzzle of his purpose, and, like an old soldier, gained half the advantage in a fight by his bold despatch and vigor. The night march and surprise were points he had learned in Indian warfare; and were it war or politics, he carried out what he had fixed upon with constant intrepidity. This intrepidity went with a conscious sense of duty; for, though a Cromwell in spirit, Jackson's ambition was honestly to serve his country. Loyalty to the Union, sympathy with the American common people, were the chief impulses of his being, for all he loved power; and hence a majority was almost sure to sustain him. Courage and directness the people admire in any man, and a sordid or usurping nature they are apt to discover. Jackson had the Midas touch, which could transmute whatever he handled, if not into solid gold, at least into a substance of popularity. And yet no servant of the ballot-box felt less the need of courting popularity, or of waiting for public opinion to

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bear his plans forward. Lesser statesmen might be exponents, but he led on, leaving the public to comment as it might.

We have intimated more than once in our narrative that Jackson was neither so frank nor so chivalrous as he passed for, nor yet so little of a politician. Was there ever a great general who did not employ strategy? Jackson could dissimulate, and in his very maladies he gained some crafty advantage. One of his warmest admirers has pronounced him a consummate actor, whose art often imposed the policy of rashness.* Van Buren found him a man guarded and self-controlled where he had seemed impetuous.† He could put off an inconvenient friendship so as to make his friend appear the wrong-doer.‡ Of darker duplicity signs, though inconclusive, are not wanting.§ But his blunt perceptions of right and wrong, his brutal obstinacy, and the tail-wagging subservience which he exacted from those about him did the country he meant to honor an irreparable mischief. While President his irascibility forced those who would influence him to take to tortuous methods. Cabinet officers, men far better versed in affairs than himself, had to fall in with his opinions, and seem to yield; overreaching, if they might, when executing his orders, or bringing the subject up again. This, and his preference for the kitchen advisers, had something to do with his frequent cabinet changes. All had to pay court to get on. Van Buren earned most from his intimacy, playing the faithful hound, and it cost him dearly in the end. The circle surrounding the old man fed him with gross flattery. All this gave soon the smirch to decent self-respect. Personalism came to tincture all politics, all policies, all politicians, under his arbitrary and exacting administration; and the painted Jezebel of party patronage seized upon the public trusts for her favorites.

* Wise's Decades, 111.

† Van Buren's Political Parties, 311.

‡ As, *e.g.*, in the case of Calhoun.

§ See *supra*, p. 87; and observe his course in the Texas annexation.

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Such a state of things was sure to breed corruption sooner or later. Prætorian bands showed the first symptom of Rome's decay; bands of office-holders, united by the necessity of keeping the spoils and salaries from other bands equally ravenous, may prove an early symptom of our own, if the people submit to it. Personally honest and unstained by bribery, Jackson played nevertheless into the hands of others who traded upon his violence; greedy followers milked the offices they had gained by partisan service. Even the battery of the National Bank, in which he led off, had its pugilistic aspect: money put up against money, and monopoly fighting monopoly.

Jackson's illiteracy is admitted by his admirers; but opponents of his day made too much of it, as though administration were a matter of mere scholarship. Longer experience in popular self-government has dispelled that illusion. It was of greater note that his strong personal feelings mingled in all he said or did, and that opponents were colored by his temperament. In conversation he interested, whether he convinced or not, being clear, earnest, and straight to the point both in thought and expression; and while no question admitted of two sides to his mind, his own was fearlessly grasped. As his speech was sagacious and incisive, in spite of slips in grammar or mispronunciation, so he could write with powerful effect, though no scholar in the true sense, and in personal controversy he was one to be feared. His state papers engaged able minds in and out of his cabinet, yet the direction of thought, the statement of policy, the temper of the document, were his own. Others might elaborate the argument for him or polish and arrange the composition, but, after all, his was the central thought; and he would flourish over the paper with a rapid pen, and a huge one, until sheet after sheet lay before him glistening with ink and glowing with expression as though it were written in his heart's blood. That there were misspelt words to be corrected, or awkward sentences to be trussed up afterwards by his secretary, is not to be denied. In short, Andrew Jackson read little upon books and much upon experience with un-

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conventional life and human nature; but he had what is essential to eminence in either case, a vigorous intellect and a strong will.* In the conduct of affairs he took advice wherever he saw fit, and like a commander secretive of his own plans, tested the views of his council and then made up his own mind.

Such was the remarkable man whose shaping influence in national affairs made him the transcendent figure of these times; in him of all Americans the Union, for thirty years prior to the eventful 1860, was personified. In faults and merits alike he was so great, and he produced so much that was good and so much that was vicious, that the historian may well be perplexed to trace the blending line. This warrior first entered office with an easier task before him than any of his predecessors, and twice when he took the official oath he might have shaped his course peacefully to the popular predisposition which was to reward a veteran soldier with the highest mark of honor. Twice, however, as we have seen, did he surprise expectation, both by the vitality of his rule and his peculiar aptitude for fighting out some new political policy. He fought well, as he had always done, and was as pertinacious in returning to the attack and mortifying the foes who had wounded his friends. Quarrels and bad blood made the large component of these eight years' policy; the fight of factions made the spoils of office, for the first time, a national principle; the fight with the Bank, originating, most likely, in personal offence, was a

* Rapid perception was Jackson's strong intellectual trait; his defect was in the logical faculty, the power to reason out his case. In this latter respect, the pens of others, and Kendall's pen most of all, did him great service; hence many of the scholarly cast, like Adams, imagined that Amos Kendall was the ruling mind of the administration. 10 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 366. Kendall's genuine admiration of the man refutes this. Kendall's Autobiography, 634. And Kendall, Blair, and Benton, most competent witnesses, all testify that Andrew Jackson bore the men and measures of his administration on his own shoulders. Kendall ib.; "Globe" Recollections of 1856; 1 Benton, 736.

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personal one to the close; and but for his personal rupture with Calhoun one may well doubt whether nullification would ever have raised its reptile head. Jackson's best act was to trample down that heresy, though the snake was only scotched, and his worst was to debauch the public service. In the one, as in the other, his example long outlived him. But most pernicious of all, in quick results, he initiated the treacherous policy of Mexican dismemberment and annexation for the sake of slavery; from a motive pseudo-patriotic, however, to preserve the equilibrium of the Union, and with a responsibility quite indirect for the worst that followed after he had set the ball in motion. As for the rest, his foreign policy was brilliant and sagacious; his stand on the tariff and internal improvements judicious for the times; his course to the Indians, though harsh, not without justifying reasons. He paid off the national debt, like the punctilious planter he was, who abhorred all debt, public and private, and with real opportunity might have left to his country some plan for disposing of a national surplus instead of leaving himself on record as a censurer of all plans. Upon his financial policy our narrative has dwelt already, and the full effect of that glorious folly, the transfer of the deposits, will soon be shown. With all his fervent zeal, there were limitations to his theory of public banking, limitations to his theory of a fraternal Union.

No President ever ruled these United States in times of peace with a personal supremacy so absolute as the two great chieftains of our Democracy, Jackson and Jefferson, though in methods and character they were so little alike. The one was a born manager of men, the other a stern dictator; the one philanthropic to the socially oppressed, the other a hater rather of the social oppressor; each, however, influenced by a love of country which was a ruling passion, by constitutional restraints somewhat independently interpreted, and, in later life at least, by an unconscious bias to the side of the South whenever slavery was threatened with violence by northern agitators. This last in Jefferson weakened his practical efforts in the anti-slavery

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cause, though he was anti-slavery in sentiment to the end; in Jackson, who thought himself no worse for being a master, if a kind one, it stimulated the determination to make his section strong enough to hold out against the abolitionists, for abolitionists and nullifiers were all hell-hounds of disunion. Jefferson had gently manipulated Congress; Jackson ruled in defiance of it, and by arraying the people, or rather a party majority on his side, against it, until the tone of his messages, if not really insolent, was that of conscious infallibility. Congress is elastic, however, and easily rallies, being naturally the encroaching power under our co-ordinate system. But as for the people, the danger grew that their will in elections would be fettered by machinery and machine managers. In these years the Democracy made rapid strides, and the nation, too, advanced in power. Self-confidence increased, and a domineering disposition. There was a vigorous vulgarity about this administration at every point, resolution, and a passionate love of danger. And yet at home, factions and mob violence were always on the increase; and though the principles of national institutions and of fundamental authority were discussed as never before nor since, there never was a time short of civil war when lawlessness gained so nearly the upper hand in the community. The most dangerous infractions of the constitution are those not violent enough to provoke the governed to open resistance, and of such there were many. Jackson's school of philosophy was not tolerant and reconciling. There were too many friends to reward, too many foes to punish. Class was inflamed against class, the poor showed their teeth at the rich; and while the Union was constantly held up for reverence, and even idolatry, the joints were strained, the fraternal bonds parted, and men of both sections began to feel themselves less unionists at heart than before. And thus, though decked out with glory, did Jackson's iron rule plough long furrows in the back of the republic whose scars are still visible.

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CHAPTER XV.

ADMINISTRATION OF MARTIN VAN BUREN.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-FIFTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1837—MARCH 3, 1839.

IT was a perfectly characteristic letter which Jackson wrote on the 2d of March, expressing his hope to go to the capitol on the 4th to see his once-rejected minister to England sworn into office by his once-rejected Secretary of the Treasury.* Mingled with his exultant feeling on that occasion was a remorseless temper towards his foes. It was a day of bright sunshine, and the soft spring snow on the Maryland hills reflected a benignity which might well have shed its rays about that whitened head of the toil-worn soldier, upon whom multitudes gazed for the first time since his sickness, and as most felt, for the last time. Riding to the capitol in martial pomp with his successor by his side, seated in a phaeton built of wood from the frigate *Constitution*, which had just been presented by the Democracy of New York city, the old hero was greeted with cheer upon cheer wherever his figure was seen. Not even while delivering his address from the portico, which faced the east, was the new President the central figure of interest, though he spoke in a tolerant and conciliating tone such as an American Executive had not used for many a year. Van Buren spoke through a penumbra, and, conscious of his subordinate place in the popular mind, he accepted the disadvantage. The salient points of this first speech were two, both smacking of the courtier: to the South he pledged himself

1837. March 4.

* See letter quoted, 3 Parton's Jackson, 624.

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to discourage all anti-slavery agitation; and next from the whole country he implored support as an humble follower in the illustrious footsteps which he could not hope to measure.*

The new President's oration sped through the press in company with the farewell address of his predecessor, which latter was chiefly taken up with the glorification of hard money, a parting shot at the defunct National Bank, and a final appeal for the value and necessity of the Union, as it squared with his favorite ideas of policy. Jackson left for his home soon after, the broken invalid. Tender and solicitous attentions marked every stage of his progress, Van Buren himself detailing the surgeon-general to attend him on the road. Home to the Hermitage to die had been the touching strain of this farewell; but at home once more he rallied, and for eight years longer snuffed the scent of battle afar off, bearing no mean part in directing the measures of his party, and full of earnest vitality. March 7.

Whatever may have been Van Buren's ultimate purpose, tried and sagacious as he was in affairs, he accepted his chieftain's collar for the badge of dignity and wore it with grace and even ostentation. His master occupied the White House until he left the city, while he tarried modestly in his own private mansion. In person he waited upon his predecessor to the railway train and there took his filial leave. Nor was it until the emaciated hero had been borne far from sight that the Senate, after idly waiting for three whole days, received from the new President his first batch of official appointments. Truly, unless appearances belied, Jackson had kept the master hand to the last, with very little scruple of delicacy for the President who followed him. Not a single member of the old cabinet was disturbed; the only new one being Poinsett, of South Carolina, lately minister to Mexico, who was selected for the portfolio of War, which Cass had lately March 7.

* 52 Niles; newspapers of the day; 2 Statesman's Manual.

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laid down when Jackson transferred him to the court of Paris. Old Hickory was himself so conscious of having arranged the slate, that in parting with his late advisers he made a jocose allusion to his habit of taking care of his friends.* He had not been solicitous for his cabinet alone and the patronage they controlled; for, besides the *chargé* to Texas,† he nominated on the last night of his term two new justices of the Supreme Court under an act to which he had but just penned his signature; all palpable infractions of the Jeffersonian rule of courtesy to a new President. These nominations, upon which the Senate had not acted, John Catron, of Tennessee, and William Smith, of Alabama, Van Buren now renewed, adding a few new appointments, chiefly diplomatic,—George M. Dallas as minister to Russia, Henry Wheaton to Prussia, and Powhatan Ellis (whenever intercourse should be renewed) to Mexico. Having acted upon this brief list, the Senate adjourned. William Smith declining office, the President, in the recess, appointed John McKinley, of Alabama, in his stead, and the Supreme bench, thus enlarged and remodelled, with Taney for Chief-Justice, and four new southern associates, was at length a bulwark of the Jacksonian Democracy.

March 10.

And now malicious fortune took flight after her favorite son. The explosion, the inevitable explosion, which empirical finance had hastened, burst in a moment the blown bubble of fictitious prosperity on which trade had painted its image in rainbow colors and scattered ruin wide. The glorifying strain of Jackson's farewell address had scarcely died upon the ear as hero and brass band vanished slowly into the distance together, when prophecy failed and the whole crash of disastrous failure came upon the unlucky successor as he stood by the way-side gazing reverentially after the procession. The shock of the convulsion produced by a sharp contraction following upon a season of great expansion was indeed like that of 1819, and mercantile

* See 52 Niles, 20.

† *Supra*, p. 256.

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business had moved in the cycle it so often repeats. Under-trade, trade, over-trade, ruin, these are the four natural seasons which recur in turn. The second season was reached at Jackson's first accession; and by 1834, with our public debt paid off, and a commerce so happily developed that in place of former specie remittance American fabrics found their way to the ports of China and South America to purchase return cargoes, our merchants reached the climax of prosperity. Manufactures came to absorb a large amount of capital for the foreign and domestic markets. The passion grew strong, too, for building railways and canals, whose construction absorbed large sums of money. All this, with the pressing demand for the fruits of agriculture, stimulated the growth of new American towns and new centres of trade. But in the midst of this change Jackson began to fight the National Bank as Christian did Apollyon; the Bank was dismantled, the national patronage was diverted to State banks, and all over the country new State banks were created. In the seven years from '30 to '37 the nominal capital of these banks increased from 110 to 225 millions. Bank-notes multiplied enormously, for there was no efficient regulator of the currency; bold enterprises likewise, for which these banks furnished ready capital; energy soon rose to infatuation, and so high was the beat of feverish speculation that the season of over-trade was run through with locomotive speed. And now came the crisis and the crash of national ruin; and what hastened the calamity most of all was the derangement in the flow of metallic currency produced by Jackson's specie circular.* A second cause of disaster, for which Congress was more to blame, came from the surplus distribution to the States,† for on the quarter-days of January and April, as the law provided, the surplus instalments were drawn from the pet deposit banks, leaving them quite exhausted. And once more there was now a glut of merchandise from Europe; and having imported more than they could well dispose of,

1830-37.

1837.

* *Supra*, p. 261.

† *Supra*, p. 231.

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our merchants, since American credit was impaired, had to draw heavily on their banks for specie to be shipped across the Atlantic.

More and more severe had been the financial strain through the winter. Money grew scarce, commanding exorbitant interest rates, which rose as high as three or four per cent. a month. Ambitious ventures of every kind required cash to tide them along so that outstanding engagements might be fulfilled. Labor found no relief from the incubus of high rents and provisions. In New York city angry meetings were still held at the park, though with less riotous accompaniments than before.* Here were seen fiery hand-bills posted on the walls: "No rag money; give us gold and silver; down with the chartered monopolies." While the workingman was thus oppressed he imagined his oppressor screwing up a fortune at every turn, and in that same harsh key Jackson had pitched his farewell address. It did not take long to falsify that theory. Late in March a heavy cotton failure was announced in New Orleans, which involved other houses besides, with correspondents in New York city. The strained cord of speculation snapped apart at once.

March.

Embarrassments which were first felt in two great seaports vibrated to every quarter of the Union. Millions of acceptances were returned protested from the South and West. Wild panic spread from town to town; business men suspended payment, house after house went down, contract engagements were defaulted, improvement projects came to a stop, and mechanics discharged their hands, unable to provide work for them. Down came the mercury of fictitious prices; merchandise fell in value thirty per cent.; real estate depreciated, and more still did the local stocks in railroad and canal enterprises. Cotton, tobacco, all the great staples, felt the shock; and as for breadstuffs, instead of exporting them it happened this year that America had been forced to draw upon the granaries of Europe because of a bad harvest. Ill fared the

April.

* *Supra*, p. 264.

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banks in this evil extremity. At first the chief establishments of New York and Philadelphia tried to relieve by enlarging their discounts, and Biddle, whose word was still law, besought the men of business to have confidence in themselves. But such aid was only temporary. Ill news from Europe depressed the market more heavily; the Bank of England, so far from aiding, stopped the foreign credit of American banking-houses; and when the wild run began, institutions trusted as the soundest were soon drained of their metals. The banks concerted measures of self-defence against their customers. On the 10th of May all the banks of New York city suspended specie payment; those in Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore followed on hearing the news, Biddle's mammoth among the rest; and summer saw not a bank in the whole Union meeting its demands in gold and silver. The legislature of New York at once legalized suspension in that State for a year, and other legislatures took the same course at the earliest opportunity.* May.

In States like New York, which had helped Jackson's yellow-jackets into circulation by five-dollar laws,† small currency was now melted out of sight, and the butcher or the baker took his pay in printed tickets and "I O U's."‡ Happy was the individual whose personal credit could float such petty promises. There had been much private banking of late in the remote parts of the Union, and private bank issues swelled the indigestible mass of pulp-money on trade's overloaded stomach. The only local circulation really sanctioned was the paper of chartered banks; but in the present maelstrom few States compelled with authority, and there was no national regulator at all.

The bitter cup for the Jackson dynasty amid this general humiliation was the suspension, the utter prostration of its favored depositories. Not all the foresight of selection or security, nor the conduit of the Treasury rills into

* Newspapers of the day; N. A. Review, January, 1844; 2 Statesman's Manual.

† *Supra*, p. 260.

‡ Seward's Biography, 330.

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their choice cisterns, had saved them from calamity. Deposit and non-deposit banks, the fed and the unfed, bent like dry reeds in the storm and broke together. The trap of suspension sprang upon nine millions or more of government funds which were divided among the banks of twenty-six independent jurisdictions; or rather the public revenue to that amount had already sunk through these bottomless coffers into the common bog of speculation. The statistics of this loss were highly discreditable to the government, indicating gross favoritism; for while our Treasury had already drained out nearly all the public deposits in New England and New York banks, the remote and less responsible custodians of the southwest had been left with large funds not drawn upon. A Mobile bank led the list with over a million dollars in default to the government, and three banks of Mississippi and Louisiana stood next, each owing eight hundred thousand.* And these were surplus moneys which would accrue to the different States in October, the third or July instalment having been met by the Treasury with great difficulty. By the time these pet deposit banks had completely suspended the general government was in great distress. Its specie revenue had dwindled to a mere rill; of bullion scarce a million dollars were left in the mint; in vain did Van Buren threaten his insolvent custodians. Woodbury, Secretary of the Treasury, soon yielded to the situation and began paying off public creditors in the paper of suspended banks. But a practical favoritism made this administration detested. Not the contractor alone, but the pensioner, the day laborer in public employ, the soldier and sailor, all were paid in this depreciated stuff, in the notes of banks on the eve of utter bankruptcy, while the President and the high officials of the nation drew their salaries in specie as before; and the same privilege was tendered on the first opportunity to members of Congress, as though to make them share in the odium.

July–Oct.

To make the new Executive still more obnoxious, that

* See tables in 53 Niles, 35.

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specie circular was punctiliously enforced, which hung by the hair of Jackson's potency against the will of the late Congress.* A mass-meeting of New York merchants instructed delegates to go to Washington and ask that the order be repealed or modified. But Van Buren refused their request, bound, perhaps, by some personal pledge to his chieftain. A new circular from the post-office soon applied the same requirement of specie payments for mail transactions. The business community were mortified and exasperated. Public meetings of the merchants denounced the despotism which paid out in paper and exacted payments in coin. "There is no people on the face of God's earth," exclaimed one speaker, "so abused, cheated, plundered, and trampled on by their rulers as are the people of the United States, and the time may come when the crew will be compelled to take possession of the ship."† May. May.

The distress of these times was not confined to our own country; it extended, but with less symptoms of alarm, to England and France, whose financiers were in straits of their own. Through the pelting storm of abuse Van Buren preserved that outward complacency for which he was remarkable. He refused to parley with government laborers who gathered on the White House grounds to present their grievance, and at once checked that pressure from mass-meeting committees which had so annoyed his predecessor by declining audience and requiring them to communicate with him in writing.‡ But he had not read the signs of the sky, if Benton's tale be correct.§ By his own confession, the new President, as late as May 4, thought it needless to con- April-May.

* *Supra*, p. 265. † 52 Niles; newspapers of the day.

‡ 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary.

§ 2 Benton's View, 10. Benton's recollections are here a little hazy. He tells the story as though under the impression that the specie circular had been rescinded by act of Congress. That act, as we have seen, President Jackson pocketed, and it did not become a law. And see 1 Benton, 706.

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voke Congress before the usual time.* But when the catastrophe came, less than a week later, which involved the government custodians and the government itself, his eyes were opened. On the 15th of May an extra session of Congress was proclaimed to be held at Washington on the first Monday of September.

May 15.

The Twenty-fifth Congress assembled on the appointed day, every week of the intermission having added to the public embarrassment. Both Houses met with a quorum. In the Senate Vice-President Johnson took the chair. The House re-elected James K. Polk Speaker on the first ballot, by a majority of eight votes over his Whig rival, John Bell, of his own State.† The President's message, sent in on the following day, recited the disastrous events of the past six months, the general and almost simultaneous suspension of the deposit banks in May, and the embarrassment of the public operations in consequence. Under the act of 1836 the Treasury had already struck from its list those selected banks which refused to pay in specie and fulfil their engagements with the government, but others had not been found to employ in their place. Drafts for transferring the public funds or depositing the surplus with the States had been met with pressing requests for indulgence. The delinquency of these banks had involved the government. The result was a deficiency in the Treasury. Estimates of the last winter must now be discarded; more means must be had; and of the nine millions now locked up in defaulted banks, which were to have gone to the States on the 1st of October, every dollar would be needed for the disbursements of the Union. Even then treasury notes would have to be issued, while the balances remained uncollected.‡

Sept. 4.

Sept. 5.

Of more moment was some plan by which the present

* Letter to New York delegation in 52 Niles, 166.

† The vote stood 116 to 103, with 5 scattering votes, showing a serious defection from the Congress previous, when Polk's majority for Speaker was 48.

‡ President's Message, Twenty-fifth Congress.

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chaos in the deposit and currency system of the country might be relieved. Van Buren had framed such a plan, and one to which the emergency naturally led: namely, the complete and final divorce of the government and its operations from banks, State or national. This scheme he now bravely stated and fairly argued. It offered a platform for the Democracy consistent with the loco-foco professions for hard money, that currency which had lately peeped and disappeared. The new doctrine was to place the general government in all its dealings on a specie basis and make it the custodian in its own vaults of its own funds. This doctrine of the government its own depository, which the new President's message for the first time unfolded, was elaborated in the report which accompanied it from the Secretary of the Treasury.*

Such was the plan of the "independent treasury," as its friends called it, or, as more commonly styled, of the "sub-treasury." It was simple, natural, and easy to comprehend; taking, in fact, the exact diagonal from the forces which so lately were opposed. But this was an innovation, and all innovations have prejudice to surmount, and that most formidable of all forces, the force of habit. Trade had climbed and clustered for so many years about the tower of a National Bank that its now prostrate vines felt the want of that same solid masonry to sustain them. Then, again, the State bank interest, still powerful, hoped to regain its favors. Other objections occurred at once. Would not an independent treasury increase instead of diminishing the dangerous power of the Executive? And granting that the system might work well while the Union spent its whole income, paying out as fast as it received, these were still surplus years of revenue with the crisis once surmounted; and with ten millions at least, and perhaps twice and thrice or even four times that amount, of the precious metals locked up idle in the public safes a business convulsion was certain; for in finance to hoard is to throw into disorder. In the present universal depression

* Ex. docs.; 53 Niles; 2 Statesman's Manual.

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this looked, too, like a direct attack upon the whole banking and credit system of the country, like an effort by an administration whose sincerity was not greatly confided in to subvert all banks and all bank circulation. The solid objection to the new proposal lay, however, in its incompleteness; a medicine was offered, but not a panacea. It met the immediate question of affording a safe place for the public deposits and might develop an exchange system practicable enough for the wants of the government; but the broader question of a safe and uniform national currency it left untouched, uncured. From this point of view, indeed, the Van Buren plan looked like a selfish abandonment of the people's ship in distress. Instead of helping the craft to weather the gale the government "took the long boat." *

The independent treasury idea was the lasting fruit of this administration, and to Van Buren belongs the credit of producing it. It was sound and excellent so far as it went, and, though the plan helped sink the originator, it indicated his courage and capacity. A persistent opposer of banking privileges, the thought germinated early in his mind; and while he consulted others he was dominant in giving form and shape to the measure.† No one aided in embodying the idea in legislation so much as his friend Silas Wright, the influential senator from Van Buren's own State, and the purest man of the whole Albany regency. The son of a poor farmer, and well born only in the sense of having been born at all, Wright grew up a Democrat by taste and inheritance and in all the relations of life unselfish and honorable. Having paid his own way through college and into the legal profession, he shared in those mingled honors of barrister and politician which befall a village practitioner. Round by round he mounted the ladder after Marcy, of his State, until, in 1833, he succeeded him in the United States Senate, after serving for a brief term

* So Caleb Cushing expressed it, a rising young Whig of versatile talents and principle, now serving his second term in the House.

† See Van Buren MSS. and letter of William Allen Butler to this writer, May 23, 1888. Chief-Justice Taney was privately consulted on this plan.

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in the House. Here in the galaxy of distinguished statesmen he slowly gained renown as a clear and convincing speaker, a sure-footed politician, and in the committee-rooms an untiring worker; in short, what is better than a brilliant statesman, a useful one.* As the President's confidential adviser and one of the Senate committee on finance, he prepared the financial bills of this extra session, and presently reported to the Senate the first sub-treasury bill. Clay and Webster opposed him. After much discussion the bill passed the Senate by a small majority, but in the House was laid on the table by the combined vote of the Whigs and conservatives.† 1837. Sept. 14. Oct. 4. Oct. 14.

The impression conveyed by the President's attitude, of cunning hostility to the whole banking system, was strengthened by other reflections contained in his message. He advised applying the process of bankruptcy to all defaulting banks. Though unimpassioned, his message seemed to take its pitch from New York loco-focoism and the demagogue agitators in the park. Even his proposal for treasury notes to meet the existing deficit, though reasonable enough, was snuffed at suspiciously, as though it might be a paper scheme in disguise, some subterfuge for setting up a government bank. The President's hard-money friends were chary of imitating the British exchequer issues, which had a noiseless way of piling up debt like falling snow-flakes; and, disregarding what the Treasury recommended,—the issue of notes as low as $20 not bearing interest,—Congress confined the issue to $10,000,000, in amounts not less than $50, and bearing interest, so as to be available for investment and not circulation.‡

One more act for temporary relief postponed the fourth surplus instalment to the States which was nominally due in October; a needful measure, but most unpopular, and

* See Jenkins's Silas Wright.

† Debates of Congress. The vote in the Senate stood 26 to 20 in favor of the bill. The House vote to lay on the table was 120 to 107.

‡ Act Oct. 12, 1837; Debates of Congress; 2 Benton, 1833.

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the Whigs made their gain by voting as a minority against it. Though lacquered so cautiously as a deposit, the States had clung to this distribution as a gift, nor dreamed of treating it otherwise. The first and second instalments had been paid in specie, the third in depreciated paper, and the fourth the States now demanded as though it were rightfully theirs already. The President's party supported him with a tremor. The transfer of the fourth instalment was not refused by this new statute, but postponed till January, 1839, and that, too, with a softening proviso that the three former instalments should remain on deposit until Congress called for it.* The sequel commemorates the shifts of all legislation for popular effect. That year, 1839, ushered in a national debt instead of a surplus, and the fourth instalment was never divided. Congress in return never recalled from the several States a dollar of the pretended deposit.† And it would be hard to say what benefit the States themselves ever derived from the surplus distributed among them, for the money, as it came, flowed like hot lava while the eruption was going on, and vanished underground into the Herculaneum of buried enterprises.

With one or two minor measures for relief Congress adjourned, this extra session lasting almost six weeks.

Oct. 16. Both political parties looked for guidance to the fall elections. The Whigs, under Clay and Webster, had taken that easy ground, offered to all parties in their position, of opposing the administration plans of relief, while offering no substitute. Clay's personal preference inclined to chartering a new national bank, but, knowing that the popular feeling ran the other way, he was content with announcing that an independent treasury was not the true nor the sole remedy. That same sentiment drew into the Whig ranks most men of intelligence who believed in bank paper and a credit system, as opposed

* Act October 2, 1837.

† The amount of these instalments, aggregating $28,000,000, stand on the books of the Treasury as unavailable funds. 2 Sumner's Jackson.

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to Spartan financiering and this black-bread diet of hard money. Those State bank men, moreover, who had applauded Jackson's fight with the old griffin, thought it a very different thing when they in turn were trampled on. Van Buren's frankness and courage, traits not believed of him, made the business community very suspicious; there was thought some demagogue craft at the bottom. Misery and distrust make strange bedfellows in such an emergency. This new drift from the loco-foco Democracy was encouraged by the fall elections. They showed a great Whig gain and foreshadowed greater victories to come. Van Buren was already losing ground. In his own great State the people were leaving him, and the complexion of the legislature changed. Local rather than national, such successes put new fervor into the Whig cause, and were hailed far and wide as a triumph of principles. Whig enthusiasm in those days was of a kind that took men off their feet,—it was the fervor of choice spirits. In Boston, in Philadelphia, in Baltimore, jubilee meetings were held, while Manhattan island fairly leaped for joy. At Washington itself midnight rejoicers went round with a brass cannon and fired their salute before the President's very door.* Now was the time when young men, the flower of our society, were baptized into politics as young Whigs. Oct.-Nov.

Never were orators so moving, nor popular assemblages so surcharged with the electric spark, nor masses of well-bred men so thrilled with the sense of their civic duties, as the Whig cause inspired when hearts were fresh. Not principle so much gave this fire and animation, for the Whigs had no clear principle except that of conservative opposition, and their splendid generals trusted too much to the genius of invention. Disconcert in policy, the want of definite and consistent aims, this to that party was a constant source of weakness; it was a glorious party while it held together, but achieved nothing permanent in our history. The Whigs made a gallant army, but they could

* 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 431; newspapers of the day.

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not turn to profit their own victories. What kindled their enthusiasm to such a pitch and kept it in a blaze was more than anything else the conscious concord of intelligent minds and liberal hearts under the most eloquent of statesmen. Their phalanx combined against the autocratic and bigoted sort of Democracy with which in truth the country was getting nauseated. For this new Democracy gave itself up to its friends, disdained soft words and courtesies, and ruled where it could with a rod of iron. To borrow a Frenchman's comparison of these days, "America was Europe with its head down and its feet up."* For there public opinion meant the current opinion among the polite, the refined, and cultivated in those middle and higher classes from which statesmen were recruited; while here the illiterate and unprosperous had been steadily gaining the upper hand.

In all free countries men divide naturally into two great parties, that of property and that of numbers. Jefferson, in his later life, was wont to distinguish them as the party fearful and distrustful of the people and wanting government in the higher classes, and the party identified with the people and having confidence in them as the most honest and safe although not the wisest depository of the public interests.† In the atmosphere of new issues, parties, nevertheless, change color, nor is hypocrisy unknown to politics. The Whig party, on the whole, was the party of property, of education, of the higher classes; the chartered monopolies, the manufacturers, infants still, crept behind its gown; protection to all was its rallying cry. Workingmen joined them in these days of depression, when they needed a helping hand; farmers, too, like mechanics, knowing that their cart was in the mire, and that only the ablest could help them out. With its southern alliances, too, and the strong national sentiment which was its constant inspiration, the Whig cause spread through

* Chevalier's Travels, 187.

† 7 Jefferson's Works, 376 (1824). Observe the use of the word "although" in this connection.

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the slaveholding section, dividing the prize with the Democracy; though the wealth produced by free labor and northern enterprise was always its closer concern. In fact, as events proved, the slaveholders had affinity rather with the Democracy, the party of numbers; for property in blacks bred somehow a disdain for the wealth which is piled up by personal exertion.

The second or long session of Congress began on the fourth day of December. The President's message showed the concern he felt over the recent elections. But he still adhered to the policy he had defined, while explaining that he meant no offence to banks in their private relation with the business of the country. Such institutions were highly useful and would continue to exist; but they had no necessary connection with the general government and the public deposits. While preferring the plan of an independent treasury to all others, he submitted his views with unfeigned deference, and was disposed to co-operate heartily with Congress so far as his sense of duty would permit.* Dec. 4. Dec. 5.

Debased copper coins had been circulating lately, mingled with those of spurious metal, which had sold by the bushel. Many of these coins were stamped with devices insulting to Van Buren and his military patron. The veteran at the Hermitage, who had given up all present idea of furnishing his funeral, now took a hand in the fray, angry with the election returns from New York and with the "Federalists" of the Union, who were trying to recover the ground they had lost in '98. In a letter which was given to the press he regretted that Democrats should be in dissension instead of rallying as one man against the common enemy. Nothing, he wrote, could be gained by trying to restore the connection of the Treasury with the local banks, which the latter had justly forfeited by their treachery to the government. He had trusted them, he confessed, as a substitute which might do better and could

* Ex. Docs., Twenty-fifth Congress; Message, December 5, 1837.

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not do worse than the United States Bank; but they had violated all obligation, suspended specie payment, and robbed the treasury of many millions. He believed in receiving the revenue in gold and silver, hoped the idea would be discarded of ever trusting public money to the banks again, and commended the plan of his successor as safe and simple.*

But the word of the chief did not avail. "Hurrah for Jackson!" had lost its magic. Too recently had he left office felicitating his country upon the prosperity and happiness he had brought it. He now acknowledged his mistake; but his bitter words neutralized all the sedative influence Van Buren labored to produce. A second time in
December. the Senate did Wright report the sub-treasury bill, with its plan more fully developed, and a new clause was added which required all the receipts and disbursements of the government to be in specie. In
1838. January. an able speech he reviewed the whole subject of managing the public revenue; the local banks, he argued, had proved incompetent, and no middle ground was left between this and the National Bank plan. In the
March 24. Senate, after a long struggle, the specie clause was struck out,† and two days later the bill passed that
March 26. branch by a close majority;‡ but the House on a
June 25. test vote rejected it.§ Another futile effort in the
1838-39. third session closed the record of the present Congress on the subject.‖

One point, however, the administration had scored as the discussion reopened. The mighty triumvirate of the
1837-38. Senate, so terrible in assault, dissolved forever; Calhoun going to the Democrats, while Clay and Webster remained with the Whigs in closer rivalry. The Carolinian wizard, with his sophisms and insular state, had obstructed all tendencies to unite under the Whig standard,¶

* 53 Niles, 314.
† The vote stood 37 to 14.
‡ By 27 to 25.
§ There were 111 in favor, 125 against it.
‖ Debates of Congress; 53 and 54 Niles.
¶ Clay's Priv. Corr., 412.

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and by a conversion, which seemed as sudden as that at Tarsus, he embraced the Van Buren faith. The specie clause was his own, and, to use his favorite phrase, he wished to unbank the banks. His new fervor in the nice balance of parties was not to be viewed by senators without vexation on one side and delight on the other. For though Calhoun had co-operated these last five years as a man without a party, and almost without a country, yet his force had been felt, since opposition in politics is always the weightier when concentrated from different points. The chagrin was Clay's, and in the debates of the next two years he made many a keen thrust at his late ally. Calhoun thrust back, and each one in his appropriate style vindicated his public conduct and discoursed of his own glory. John Quincy Adams has likened the contention to that of the Greek orators for the crown;* and in the exchange of personalities new light was shed upon the compromise of 1833, hitherto kept in secret.† Such contests of oratory delighted like the sparring of great counsel in a case whose merits are forgotten. 1838–40.

Calhoun in his present correspondence put the bank question on the footing of '98, and saw in it that crisis which was his constant spectre. "Of all measures," he wrote, "the union of government and banks has the most powerful tendency to consolidation, and is the most hostile to the federative character of our system; and never did the great original leader of the Federal or National party, Alexander Hamilton, display profounder sagacity or greater boldness than in consummating this unholy alliance."‡ Clay, on the other hand, professed to discover in this policy of divorce a deep-laid plan to establish an Executive Bank managed by the Treasury, and with that end in view to overthrow the whole banking system of the Union as it now existed, beginning with the 1838. September.

* 9 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 506. Benton states that, to his knowledge, Calhoun refreshed himself for this encounter by reading the Demosthenes oration on the Crown. 2 Benton's View, 98.

† *Supra*, p. 106.

‡ 53 Niles, 76.

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National Bank and ending with the local ones; a plan which originated with Jackson, of which the sub-treasury was an intermediate step.* Webster's speeches against the sub-treasury bill were among the most splendid and powerful efforts of his life.

We have seen that the sub-treasury act not only failed in the House at the second session, but was stripped in the Senate of that clause which proposed the exclusive use of gold and silver in the public revenues. Loathsome to the people though this stagnant flood of bank paper undoubtedly was, it was desirable to help the banks upon their feet again. To this end a joint resolution passed both Houses which virtually repealed Jackson's invidious specie circular. Van Buren approved it, and new instructions accordingly issued from the Treasury.†

1837–38.

1838. July 9. A new issue of treasury notes was authorized to meet the current wants of the government.‡ Congress adjourned for the second time on the 9th of July, leaving much of its pending business unfinished.

The progress of the sub-treasury bill had been watched by the suspended banks, and the news of its signal defeat strengthened their impulse to resume specie payments. In May the New York banks ceased to suspend, as the law compelled them to do under penalty of forfeiture, but the banks of other States refused to join them.

May.

1838. A convention of bank officers from all parts of the Union, in which a majority of the States were represented, had discussed this point during April, sitting with closed doors in New York city. To the surprise of the whole country, the United States Bank of Philadelphia, the old demogorgon in a new shape, led off in opposing all plans for immediate resumption, and Biddle, its president, gave some plausible reasons to the press. His views carried that convention. January, 1839, a date nearly nine months distant, was the date fixed upon by thirteen out of the fifteen States represented. Mississippi

April 15.

* 2 Statesman's Manual, 1162.

† Joint Res., May 31, 1838.

‡ Act May 21, 1838.

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thought that time too early; New York, of course, too late. Under Biddle's influence, so it was credibly asserted, bank delegates from ten States refused to attend the convention or to vote at all. It was now a question whether New York or Philadelphia should dominate in finance. The New York banks repudiated the convention and the United States Bank. They resumed payment. The Boston banks did the same on the 1st of July. Congress having repealed the specie circular and adjourned, the clamor against delinquent banks grew louder. Governor Ritner, of Pennsylvania, brought a pressure to bear which forced the banks of that State to call a new bank convention at Philadelphia. The local banks of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri now resolved to follow New York's example and resume specie payments by the 13th of August. They did so; of other States at the northwest and southwest, some followed, some lingered, and institutions too weak for the march were exposed to the mercy of their creditors. In New York and New England, that soundest part of the Union, the close of 1838 found local banks in tolerably sound condition; but credit and confidence revived very slowly.*

July 23.

August.

December.

Where was that once glorious institution whose citadel had been thought impregnable? The Bank of the United States, still smiling sickly on the wreck, parted with its proud prestige. Cut down from a national to a local bank in 1836, the storm drove it upon the rocks with the rest. But its suspension, so Biddle explained, was because it "owed a duty" to the public, and had it consulted its strength alone it would have kept on.† This specious strain of hypocrisy made its last days hideous. Jobbery and log-rolling had carried its thirty years' charter through the State legislature at Harrisburg; a charter which sanctioned the parade of its married name and the

1836.

* 54 and 55 Niles; 2 Benton, 83; newspapers of the day.
† 52 Niles, 182; Biddle's letter.

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same capital stock of $35,000,000, which it had before divorce, an amount absurdly large for its new and contracted range of business. Its new charter of deformity was covered with leeches. There was scarcely a suckling enterprise, public or charitable, in the whole lobby that did not mount it in the legislature. Biddle pretended that the legislation had originated with the State of Pennsylvania; and yet it proved that $400,000 of the bank funds were spent while the bill was pending for which no vouchers were produced. Weakened by the hard conditions of its new lease and the scandal of its procurement, hurried into reckless expenditures by an insatiate thirst to enlarge its popularity and influence, debauched by the secret exchange committee which had absorbed its entire direction, the Bank of the United States of Philadelphia, whose very title breathed a misnomer, was in no fit condition to weather the tempest into which it was launched. Meantime, the blows of its enemies fell hot and fast. Congress had put an end to the receipt of its notes into the Treasury.* Under the authority conferred upon him,† the Secretary of the Treasury had sold the shares held by the government at a time when the Bank felt induced to buy them in at high figures. When it attempted to reissue its old national notes, instead of cancelling and retiring them, the abuse was stopped, on Van Buren's suggestion, by legislation which threatened a criminal prosecution.‡ Let us turn from the last hideous scenes of debauchery into which our divorced queen of public credit was plunging. Nothing breeds more rapidly, when a bank goes into politics, than its own propensity to corruption.

The Whigs fought bravely this year. Every effort was made to fuse the opposition into a solid force; but to declare for another National Bank was just now inexpedient. Clay himself owned that no such establishment should be attempted until a clear majority of the peo-

1838.

* Act June 15, 1836.
† Act June 23, 1836.
‡ Act July 6, 1838.

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ple called for it, which, perhaps, they would do in time.* Important elections to Congress filled the intervening space from July to November, during which governors and legislators, too, were to be chosen in some twenty different States. Up to September and for a full year the current had run strong and deep against the administration, sweeping away the old Democratic majorities. Some of the fall elections this year depressed the Whigs, in Ohio for instance, but the total result was inspiriting. They carried North Carolina, Kentucky, Rhode Island, and Indiana, and gained in Illinois and Missouri. In Pennsylvania, where Porter, a Democrat, appeared on a close poll to have been chosen governor over Ritner, riot and disorder blotted the election returns of Philadelphia county. Fraud was charged on each side, and much depended on the decision. When the time came for the legislature to assemble and determine the official returns, a mob gathered at Harrisburg, drove the speaker of the popular branch from his chair, and threatened bloodshed. Governor Ritner asked for United States troops, but the President declined to interfere. The controversy was composed late in December, and Porter's election officially declared.† In New York State, however, the Whigs won a brilliant victory, for here Marcy and the Albany regency were routed and William H. Seward carried into the governor's chair by over 10,000 majority. The success of this young Whig statesman at thirty-seven years, in disputing Van Buren's long supremacy, marks a new era in national politics. The loco-focos had pledged their adhesion to the President's policy of hard money and a sub-treasury, and on that pledge they lost.‡

December.

On the whole, the new national party felt encouraged, but a closer co-operation between the Whigs and conservatives was desired in doubtful States like Virginia before the great Presidential campaign. In this situation eleventh-

* Clay's Private Correspondence, 429.

† 55 Niles and local newspapers; 10 J. Q. Adams's Memoirs.

‡ Ib.; 1 Seward's Biography.

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hour recruits from the Jackson party were made welcome.* Other influences came into play besides the financial discussion. Van Buren's management of affairs had been greatly hampered by the crowd of favorites Jackson left installed at the public crib, taking good care that they should not be disturbed. Scrutiny into his use of the patronage the chieftain had always resisted, and his sensitiveness on the subject the House had felt compelled to respect.† Here once more the successor suffered for the follies of his patron to which he was bound. A change of officials in the New York custom-house showed that Swartwout, the collector,—a man so notoriously unfit to handle half the revenues of the Union that Jackson made a public scandal by appointing him,—was a defaulter for more than a million dollars. His peculations had been going on eight years. Other official deficits were discovered, not so much through official inspection as in consequence of the financial troubles which tried all men. Land officers, postmasters, public prosecutors, had been gambling and speculating with the moneys in their charge, and keeping loose accounts, nor had their official bonds been well looked after.‡ States with the worst credit in the land had not only been favored when public moneys were left on deposit, but trust funds confided to the Union had been shamefully invested in their bonds. More than this, the surplus had induced such extravagance in public expenditure that only an Executive could have checked it who was possessed of courage not less than honesty.

But there was yet another element infused henceforth into the strife of national parties. It was the anti-slavery or abolition excitement. This new phenomenon in politics filled patriotic southerners like Clay with the deepest dismay; § for abolition societies at the North had already taken up the cry that no slaveholder ought to be chosen Presi-

* Clay's Private Correspondence, 435.

† See 52 Niles, 79, 91, as to Reuben M. Whitney's agency for the pet deposit banks.

‡ See 55 and 56 Niles. § Clay's Private Correspondence, 430.

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dent, and these abolitionists, though not yet very numerous, were sufficiently so in several States to turn a doubtful canvass. The course of national affairs had added fuel to this agitation ever since President Jackson sounded his alarm over the incendiary mail matter.* The first hope and the first effort had been to stamp out abolitionism with the hoof of authority; but southern protest did not stop here, and it was plain that the peace and welfare of the Union were menaced from opposite points. At the North abolition societies were on the increase, and the northern conscience, slowly awakening, looked about with bewilderment. Negative sentiment at the present hour was as impossible in one section as the other; politicians were borne forward by an irresistible surge of sentiment, and as the northern Democracy bent to the imperious South, when the constitution was invoked, so did their opponents, the Whigs, wherever there was a hope to conquer, court anti-slavery approval, though at the same time protesting their fealty to the Union and abhorring the very name of Garrisonian abolitionist. In New York and other closely-contested States candidates for office were questioned and compared on such points. The right of anti-slavery petition was a favorite test question. In New York, Seward pronounced as strongly in its favor as Marcy did against it. The Ohio Whigs, less conciliating to the abolitionists, lost the election. In Massachusetts the Democrats and Whigs vied with one another for this conscience vote. As a national party, however, the Democrats were ruled by the South; and an address to the people signed by the northern Congressmen of that faith, and circulated as a campaign document, argued that slavery was a local regulation with which the United States could not rightfully interfere, and that even to abolish it in the District of Columbia would be a first step towards such interference, besides breaking faith with Maryland and Virginia.†

Let us explore somewhat further the progress of the

* *Supra*, p. 221.

† 55 Niles, 7.

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anti-slavery cause since Van Buren's accession. The two points of national policy on which the northern mind was most sensitive related to the right of petition to Congress and the annexation of Texas. On both these issues, as we have seen, the Jacksonian policy was overbearing and partial; free States were reminded of their allegiance to the constitution, while a course was secretly contrived for fortifying slavery against the abolition movement. Sectional agitation and the irrepressible conflict of systems grew more violent in consequence. The repressive action of southern men in power failed to draw the moral sympathy of the North from the abolitionists. While the Colonization Society was sinking into beggary and impotence, these prospered and increased their numbers, creating, as it was averaged, one new association a day. Ten months after Jackson's successor took the oath they were reckoned at 150,000 persons, organized into 1500 societies, with missionaries and presses; less fanatical, however, than at first, and somewhat divided in opinion as to methods of action.

1837. December.

In his inaugural Van Buren had pledged himself not to approve any bill which would interfere with slavery in the District of Columbia. But this assurance, following upon the gag-rule of the House, only made the anti-slavery zealots more persistent and gained them much northern sympathy, not for their cause so much as the sacred right of petition which was denied them. This was the distinction Adams so much insisted on. Northern memorials for abolishing slavery in the federal district reappeared in the special session of this new Congress; others, too, against the annexation of Texas; but all these went over to the regular winter session. New incidents, meantime, had increased the irritation of sections. Between the governors of Georgia and Maine arose a sharp controversy. Slaves had been abducted from the former State, and two citizens of Maine charged with the offence were demanded as fugitives from justice; but the governor of Maine denied that the offence was criminal and refused to surrender them. In Massachusetts anti-slavery senti-

September.

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ment compelled a new replevin law which gave to all persons who might be arrested as fugitive slaves a trial by jury; and the supreme court of that State had lately pronounced that free soil made free the negro who once set foot in those borders with his master's assent. Alton, Illinois, that little savage of a remote western town, reeked with the blood of our first anti-slavery martyr, who was murdered for emulating Garrison's press. Elijah P. Lovejoy was the victim, a native of Maine, who had lately settled in St. Louis, and a Presbyterian clergyman. Not an abolitionist in the fullest sense, he had offended a slave-holding community by a free discussion in his paper of the forbidden subject, and his office was destroyed. Crossing the Mississippi to a free State, here he found the subject equally forbidden, and again his paper was suppressed. But he persevered in his object: his new printing-press arrived, and now a grog-shop rabble demanded it at night from the warehouse in which it was stored. Lovejoy and his friends stood guard there to protect the property. His exasperated enemies soon applied the torch to the building; they were fired upon by the defenders, and Lovejoy then stepping out to the door, perhaps to pacify or explain, fell pierced with five balls, expiring almost instantly. His friends fled, and the avengers of constitutional rights, rushing into the warehouse, broke to pieces the mute exponent of freedom, the only culprit left to them, and wreaked their wrath by flinging its iron fragments into the river.

Nov. 7.

This tragedy of the Mississippi bluff, with its sacrificial pillage, aroused discussion eastward, and gave to the abolition cause an advocate more thrilling than a hundred presses. It was in old Faneuil Hall that a meeting was held to protest in the light of day against a night's brutality. Dr. Channing was the chief speaker, and it was not radicalism, but generous feeling, that moved the audience. But public conviction in Boston, as through the entire North, was greatly divided on the merits of the case, and one Austin, who was attorney-general of the State, spoke the opinion of many when he rose in the

Dec. 8.

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gallery and compared the Alton riot with the destruction of the tea in Boston harbor, declaring that Lovejoy had "died as the fool dieth." A graceful patrician youth stepped upon the rostrum to answer him, tall, sandy-haired, composed in manner, with a voice like a silver trumpet. He held his audience not less by the chaste language and lofty serenity than the courage of his speech and demeanor, as of one schooled by high breeding to keep his deepest feelings under restraint and yet show them by their prance. It was Wendell Phillips, henceforth to be fitted with Garrison, like the tongue to the pen, an orator whose eloquence in invective no fellow-countryman of his age could equal, because no other felt so independent of surroundings. "When I heard the gentleman," said he, "lay down principles which placed the rioters, incendiaries, and murderers of Alton side by side with Otis and Hancock, with Quincy and Adams, I thought those pictured lips" (and he pointed to the portraits on the walls) "would have broken into voice to rebuke the recreant American, the slanderer of the dead."* The fame of this young speaker, henceforth an abolitionist, was purchased, we need not add, at the cost of a hundred honors which his circle would have bestowed had he not left it feeling that nobleness obliged.

Moral agitation and good-will could not go together; it was boldness and pertinacity that gave a momentum to reform. From their suitable stand of practical statesmanship, a few, a very few, of our northern men in public life espoused the radical cause. Anti-slavery petitions and memorials were presented at the second session of Congress in both Houses; and one from the legislature of Vermont was accompanied by a series of resolutions which pronounced against Texas annexation or the admission into the Union of any State whose constitution should tolerate domestic slavery, which claimed it as the right of Congress under the constitution, and its immediate duty, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia and national territories, and to prohibit the

1837. December.

* See 53 Niles; Johnson's Garrison, 228.

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slave trade from State to State. These resolutions, when Swift, of Vermont, presented them in the Senate, gave rise to an exciting discussion; William R. King, of Alabama, pronounced them an infamous libel and insult to the South; while Calhoun, in Cassandra strain, declared that the time had arrived when it must be determined whether we were to remain one united and happy people or be dissolved by the hand of violence.* Slade, of the Vermont delegation in the House, stirred that body to a still angrier demonstration, when allowed, through an inadvertence of the Speaker, to make some remarks in support of the reference to a select committee of an abolition memorial he had lately presented. In a two hours' speech he raked the institution of slavery with a merciless severity such as that chamber had never, perhaps, experienced before. Wise, Legaré, Rhett, and the other southern members were choking with rage; Polk stopped him several times, but he kept within parliamentary bounds, and in spite of angry interruptions held the floor. "He has discussed the whole abstract question of slavery," burst out Wise at last; "of slavery in Virginia, of slavery in my own district, and I now ask all my colleagues to retire with me from this hall." A scene of confusion followed; southern members from various States starting up from their seats and preparing to leave the hall in a body. The Speaker's gavel fell with repeated blows, while he tried to preserve order; many were on their feet at once to make motions, the cool Vermonter keeping possession of the floor; and finally a sagacious objector raised a point of order which the Speaker sustained and ordered Slade to take his seat. A motion to adjourn was quickly carried, and in the hubbub and confusion one southern delegate mounted a chair, and in a loud voice notified all the members from slaveholding States to attend the meeting in a certain committee-room. To this meeting, which was held in the basement of the Capitol, slaveholders repaired in large numbers, and two stormy sessions were held. Some

Dec. 19.

* Debates of Congress; 53 Niles.

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violent members, like Rhett, of South Carolina, were for resolutions to dissolve the Union, but Virginians played the peacemaker, and Patton, one of them, was at length selected to present to the House the next day what was called a conciliatory proposition. It was nothing more nor less than the Pinckney resolutions of the former Congress, and declared as before that all petitions relating to slavery should be laid on the table without being debated, printed, referred, or in any manner acted upon. Under a suspension of rules and the previous question, this resolution was adopted by 122 to 74; Adams, however, amidst a perfect war-whoop of "Order,"* crying out when his name was called that he held this measure to be a violation of the constitution and of the right of petition. Eighteen months of such muzzling had already multiplied the anti-slavery petitioners from 23 to 300,000, and yet the South was disposed to try the plan longer.†

Dec. 21.

Thus ended, as though in a spirit of fraternity and peace, the first memorable secession of southern members from Congress. But in their constant fear that the abolition fanaticism (for thus it seemed to them) of the civilized world would be hurled against their bulwarks, the South demanded new guarantees at once that the slaveholder might control his own destinies. Without these, said Rhett, the bonds of the Union were the cords by which the victim was to be bound to the altar. Texas and the acquisition of new slave territory was the real guarantee they regarded. But the anti-Texas petitions from the North had a close affinity with the District abolition ones; and to project Texas into national politics at this time would be to open the whole field of anti-slavery debate, a discussion so much dreaded that the moderate men of both sections were disposed to place a Chinese wall around the whole subject. Here was the dilemma, and the new administration felt it. Van Buren himself was a northern man with principles not so decidedly southern as his foes

* So says 9 Diary, 454.

† 53 Niles; Debates of Congress; 2 Benton, 150.

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have pronounced them. He had started, however, on the line of Jackson's policy; and Jackson's Secretary of State, John Forsyth, who favored slave expansion, was his own.

We observed that Jackson, just before leaving the Presidency, acknowledged the independence of Texas;* England and France soon followed, not to be outstripped by the United States in procuring commercial alliance with the lone republic. The shelter of our Union was the port the conquerors steered for, and greedy speculations in Texan bonds and bounty-land scrip soon drew new portions of our people to the annexation project. Labranche was the diplomatic agent to Texas so hastily accredited from the United States through Jackson's final manœuvre with the Senate. In Memmucan Hunt we received in return one of those recent fellow-citizens wrapped in a Texan skin of whom the patriot victors were so largely composed. As envoy and minister extraordinary from the new republic, Hunt presently proposed in form the immediate annexation of Texas to the United States; for by a vote almost unanimous the inhabitants of that country had preferred this condition to that of solitary independence. Van Buren, however, declined the proposal,† whether finally or for a convenient delay was not apparent, though annexationists chose to take his refusal in the latter sense. But the bare proposal was enough to arouse the opposition of the sensitive North, and petitions against annexing Texas to the Union soon poured in upon this Congress with the other anti-slavery memorials. Out of State legislatures, where this subject was earnestly debated, five—those of Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Michigan—declared their emphatic repugnance to the whole scheme; others showed a decided dislike of it; but South Carolina was most eager on the other side, and the legislatures of Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi strongly commended the cause to

August.

1837-38.

* *Supra*, p. 256.

† See correspondence communicated to Congress in October, 1837; Executive Docs.

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Congress and the country. Much art was used by slaveholders to hold up this project as a national one; but new soil meant new slave soil, and the division of State feeling showed plainly that it was so regarded. With nine slave States, which it was thought might be formed out of Texas alone, slavery would sit impregnable in the national Senate. This was too much for the northern stomach to bear at once. In vain, therefore, was Preston, of the Senate, a moderate Whig from South Carolina, and a most accomplished orator, put forward by the slave propa-

1838. April 24. gandists to embellish with his rhetoric a resolve to "reannex" the whole territory to the Rio Grande, with the consent of Texas, as a domain which was rightfully our own before the Florida treaty with Spain surrendered it. Even now Minister Hunt was trying to press the plan, and Secretaries Forsyth and Poinsett, and the President himself, so Preston thought, had been generally friendly. The Senate would take no action, while Adams, in the House debates, exposed the whole system

June. of perfidy and duplicity which the Jackson administration had pursued towards Mexico from the beginning, with this same annexation in view.* This silenced the subject for the present; and the sagacious Van Buren turning to the pacific management of American claims upon Mexico, the alarm of our free States at length subsided.

Besides the danger of a war with Mexico upon the main issue of sheltering those she regarded as her rebellious inhabitants, Texas annexation offered a further difficulty of uncertain boundaries. The political limits of Texas prior to her revolution as a State were in strictness confined to the Neuces and the Red river; and it was in keeping with their other unscrupulous dealings that these settler-

1836. Dec. 19. Texans, while in arms, voted themselves, in December, 1836, the whole territory lying between the United States and the Rio Grande from its source to its mouth, and thus took in other portions of

* Debates of Congress; 55 Niles, 92; 10 Adams's Diary.

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Mexico which they had never so much as explored. It was policy for independent Texas, whatever her status in the future, to broaden her pretensions of territory as much as possible; and it was policy for all annexationists to bait the hook sufficiently to allure the United States. The dismemberment of Mexico desired by our slaveholders was no moderate one, as shown by Forsyth's first proposal. That proposal, not for Texas alone, nor for Texas as magnified to the Rio Grande, but for a line across the continent, to comprise California and San Francisco bay, is a fact to be borne in mind, for this self-same acquisition made the pivot of our Mexican war, when the scheme was sprung again.* At present negotiations with Texas dwindled down to a harmless convention for marking the boundary between that republic and the United States.† 1835. 1838. April.

Mexico's course with Texas was marked with the same vacillation and futile pride as that the mother country had pursued towards herself. Spain did not recognize Mexican independence until the close of 1836, and the formalities being spun out, another year intervened before the first Spanish minister to Mexico reached Vera Cruz. Texas, meantime, had become a *de facto* republic, the revolter from revolutionists; the parent republic was still bent on subduing her, having protested in vain against her recognition by foreign powers. But the war for reasserting Mexico's supremacy lagged heavily after the battle of San Jacinto, and between impoverished finances on the one hand and the pressure of French and American claims on the other, the Mexican treasury could ill endure the strain of subjugating a rebellious province on the distant borders. A generous mind, while deploring the perverse folly of Mexico at this crisis, cannot but admire her stubborn resolve to preserve her autonomy through all discouragement. Mexican Presi- 1836. December. 1836–37.

* *Supra*, p. 250.

† Convention April 25, 1838; 8 U. S. Statutes; and see 8 H. H. Bancroft's History, chap. 13.

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dents in these days were made and unmade by fickle chances. The French "pastry war" quite overshadowed the Texan revolt, restored Santa Anna to influence, and gave the republic of the sierras her first taste of foreign invasion. England meditated to save Mexico from the harpy creditors of Europe. Mexico herself had counselled her fears sufficiently to keep back the greater harpies of the United States by promising to pay us all she owed.*

1837-39.

Our own dealings with Mexico at this junction may be briefly summarized. Van Buren entered office to find the helm already pointed in the State department as his predecessor left it. Too crafty to dispute the orders of his valiant captain, he veered about when he could. With the new contingent mission to Texas, Congress had appropriated for a minister to Mexico "whenever, in the opinion of the Executive," circumstances would "permit a renewal of diplomatic intercourse honorably."† The new President renewed intercourse, and sent as minister to Mexico Powhatan Ellis, of Mississippi, the same diplomatic agent who had lately broken off relations and come home. A courier was despatched from the United States in advance, bearing a new budget of claims and a fresh demand.

1837.

He reached the Mexican capital in July. The Mexican Congress had already shown the pacifying spirit and our courier was at once assured that Mexico desired to settle honorably as soon as the complaints lodged against her could be properly examined. Mexico's minister reached Washington in the autumn, and before Christmas made a definite proposal for arbitration. A strain of feverish impatience, hardly warlike, breathed in the President's message; but the tone of our Congress and people assuring the minister, once more he pressed his proposal upon the Executive in the following April, and asked a specific answer. Forsyth dryly accepted it, forced by the popular opinion; though in doing so he par-

July 20.

July 29.

October.

Dec. 23.

Dec. 5.

1838.

April 7.

* See H. H. Bancroft, chaps. 7, 13.

† Act March 3, 1837; 5 U. S. Statutes, 170.

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ried another proposal which came coupled with it, for pledging the United States to observe strict neutrality in the Texan struggle.* Texas annexation was foiled for the present. A friendly convention agreed upon, instead, between the United States and Mexico referred all claims of the former power upon the latter to the arbitration of the King of Prussia; and this proving imperfect, a fresh convention of the next year provided that a mixed commission should sit in Washington, and that Prussia, Great Britain, or the Netherlands might in an emergency appoint an umpire.† This latter convention was ratified by the United States and proclaimed in April, 1840. Van Buren's ostensible reason for this friendly arrangement in preference to the anexation of Texas was the fear of a war with Mexico in the latter alternative; and with other storms to weather, his party was content, at least for the present.

April 21.

Sept. 10.

1839. April 11.

1840. April.

The third and final session of Congress was tinged with bitterness. Before the President's message could be read in the House, Adams brought up the Texas inquiry, but his motion was stifled, and on the official assurance that all proposals for annexation had been withdrawn this subject rested. Southerners were still bent upon suppressing all anti-slavery petitioners, and a northern Democrat, Atherton, of New Hampshire, was this time the herald of their wishes. Five resolutions were proposed, four of which denied that Congress had any abstract right to interfere with slavery, while the fifth shut out petitions as before. All these resolutions were passed amid scenes of disorder. The test votes showed that the House Democrats were well braced to support the gag-rule, while northern Whigs inclined against it. Clay's

1838. Dec. 3.

Dec. 4.

Dec. 11.

1839. Jan.–Feb.

* Twenty-fifth Congress, Ex. Docs.; 55 Niles, 147; 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13.

† 8 U. S. Statutes, 526.

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comment showed him more sagacious than others of his section; he thought this policy unwise, since it held up abolitionists to sympathy as sufferers for the right of petition.* On this question Fillmore, of New York, and most other Whigs harmonized their support at home while guarding not less carefully against every imputation of fanaticism; indeed, John Quincy Adams doubted in his own mind whether there were five members in the House who would vote to abolish slavery at the capital, as these petitions prayed for.† Of the intense hatred which the abolitionists stirred up in northern centres fresh proofs were not wanting; it was less than eight months since the angry citizens of Philadelphia laid a new public hall in ashes because its doors stood open to Garrison and his friends.‡ But this throttling in Congress of the right of free memorial continually plagued its inventors; petition followed petition in the House, for the recognition of Hayti, for rescinding the gag-rule, for removing the national capital, many of these making no direct allusion to slavery at all, but praying for rights and liberties, and all requiring the Speaker to decide whether or not they must be denied admission. One rule for all petitions, upon whatever subject, that of a silent presentment and reference, might not have been inconvenient to facilitate business, but odious distinction defeated its own ends. Our silver-haired statesman, instant in season and out of season, bore upon his shoulders the cause of free petition, looking about him in vain to find some younger man willing and gifted for the oppressive task, but shaming more and more, as time went on, by his intrepid example.

1838. May.

An anti-duelling act of this session,§ which failed, however, to suppress that homicidal passion and false sense of honor whence all duels spring, reflected somewhat tardily

* Debates of Congress, February, 1839.

† 10 Adams's Diary, 63; Clay's Private Correspondence.

‡ 54 Niles; newspapers of the day.

§ Act February 20, 1839.

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upon a fatal tragedy which happened twelve months earlier. This was the bloody duel fought with rifles between two members of the House, William J. Graves and Jonathan Cilley, the one a Kentuckian of manners usually amiable, the other a young and promising man of the best New Hampshire stock, who had been lately chosen to Congress for the first time from a close district in the State of Maine. In a debate with Wise, of Virginia, Cilley, who was an independent Democrat, had discredited a statement which Wise quoted from the New York *Courier and Inquirer;* Graves bore to Cilley a note from Colonel Webb, its editor, asking an explanation, and Cilley declining to make one, Graves chose to make the quarrel his own. Wise bore a challenge from him, which Cilley accepted. The duel was fought at Bladensburg, with the weapon of Cilley's choice; three shots were exchanged, and at the third fire Cilley dropped dead, shot through the body. There were brutal incidents to this affair which certainly prolonged the hazard of encounter beyond what satisfaction under the code is supposed to insist upon; and that overstrained sense of honor which led Graves to resent the fancied affront to his newspaper friend by trespassing upon the privileges of the House, to which he belonged, and worse than this, the officious zeal of his second, Wise, who had broken off a truce after the second shot, led many to believe that two southerners had conspired to assassinate a fellow-member from the North who was obnoxious to them. Both Graves and Wise denied all vindictive feeling, and the constituency of each sustained him; but this spectacle of southern chivalry intensified the sectional enmity of this period. As long as Wise continued to figure among the eccentric statesmen of this period, the avenging spectre pursued him; through New England he was denounced as the murderer of Cilley; and the scene has been long remembered where Adams confronted this Virginian in open debate, and in bitter, yarring tones, which made the whole House shudder, accused him of coming into that assembly, "his hands dripping with blood." For Adams could use

1838. February.

Feb. 24.

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the harshest personalities in debate, as old age and character gave him license to do.*

Personalities, in truth, made the chief staple of this and many other sessions on the stage of forensic display. The sub-treasury bill, which had thrice passed the Sen-
1839. ate, lay on the table of the House at the close of this Congress, its friends not daring to call it up. The Swartwout defalcation, which the President had not shrunk from exposing, made the text of homilies on profligate corruption less for virtue's sake than for Whig effect. There was windmill, but no grist; manœuvre for position, but no engagement. Except for the last few days of the session, popularity seemed the chief regard of the debaters on both sides. It was long after midnight of Sunday, the
March 3. 3d of March, when the last lights at the Capitol were put out; and in the House the vote of thanks to the Speaker was not carried† without a long and excited debate, Bell, Wise, and Sergeant S. Prentiss recording their names against it. Polk now took his leave of the legislature, having served in the House for fourteen consecutive years. He left the impression of an able man, pure of morals, industrious in the committee-room, skilful as a parliamentary tactician and presiding officer, but intensely partisan and narrow. Taken up presently for governor of Tennessee by the party of the administration, he was chosen, served for two years, and lost his re-election. Fidelity to Jackson was his passport from that defeat to a more exalted distinction. No one in the House now imagined, not even Polk himself, under what distinguished surroundings this retiring Speaker of the House would next take up his abode at the national capital. Politics is a strange pursuit: a popular party, and the people, too, will fly to the arms of sterling mediocrity to escape the dangerous rivalry of talent.

That grand cause of universal emancipation, born, like

* See 54 and 56 Niles; S. G. Goodrich's Recollections.

† By 94 to 57; Congressional Debates.

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the curse it meant to extirpate, on European soil, moved slowly forward. The slaveholder felt its approach, but trusted that commercial cupidity would retard its progress. Abolitionism in our America sailed among the clouds; it was and it professed itself a moral reform, a striving after the theoretical good, not confined to the legally practicable nor moving on those political lines which determine how much of social progress and reform an age may safely bear. With this irresponsible movement mingled various other schemes for the regeneration of the human race, less disquieting; less convincing, too, since nothing can be plainer than the abstract wrong of holding in slavery one's fellow-men. In Europe, once more, these schemes were mostly hatched; but America, young and developing, brought up the whole brood of experiments, the sickly and the strong together. Here was fruitful ground for all the social problems of the race; here, too, that keen and restless intellect which explores without fear. In the temperance and anti-slavery agitations woman first emerged from the privacy of home life to sign public petitions and mount the platform; indeed, on this very issue of bringing into free co-operation the sexes, hitherto hedged apart in their varied spheres of action, obedient to the prudish etiquette of a social introduction, the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1840 divided. The Garrisonian wing befriended her; nor did she long work under its auspices before she imagined herself a slave to the other sex by a parallel with the negro, and began to agitate her own emancipation. Among the abolition reformers spread infidelity and a hatred no less of the churches than the government that could live peaceably in the presence of sin,—the sin against human rights. The old arguments for the established order of things had spent their force; such new-born radicals cared for nothing but novelty; the very word conservatism had a deadening sound. Religion seemed to loosen rather than bind. Protestant Christianity began to split up into a diversity of proselyting sects, none having standards of authority, and some with absurd or trivial tenets to rest upon. Mental insanity, originating often in

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religious delusions, began to work out in murders and suicides, such as befitted emotional people, more French than English; knavery and fanaticism blew the trumpet for a new age of miracles and insight into the spirit-world. In the streets of New York city might be seen a woman who carried about a Bible, and harangued the curious crowds, proclaiming herself inspired.* Joe Smith, the Mormon prophet, led his chosen band to Missouri, the earlier land of promise, where thousands joined the new faith he had founded on a pretended discovery of some holy writings graven upon plates, and dug up by him near Lake Ontario. The wonders of animal magnetism, mesmerism, and clairvoyance were next made known and pressed into the use of cheap exhibitions of the future state. Other reforms were for this life. Socialism was preached by those English agitators, Robert Owen and Fanny Wright, the latter a pioneer among female orators of the emancipated type.† To communism in property the locofocos of New York had shown some tendency. Fourierism, with its broad indecencies of promiscuous life and its impracticable theory of associated industry, had its little school of advocates by the time Owen went out of fashion. In medicine started out homœopathy, hydropathy, the Graham diet, and the Thompsonian cure. Non-resistants started up among those who were forcing the rest of mankind to war. Phrenology was a new study, enabling human character to be read by the protuberances of the brain. And scarcely had these philanthropic and religious revolutions been set in motion by the friends of universal progress, when William Miller, an American farmer, flamed like a comet to announce, calendar in hand, that the world was coming to an end. No idea was so absurd or so visionary that one might not hope to found a school or a sect upon it in this new American

1837.

1841–42.

* 2 Arfwedson's Travels (1833).

† See Trollope's Travels, alluding to Miss Wright's attempt to teach black and white children together in order to prove that nature had endowed them equally.

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society, if only he seemed to be in earnest; whether earnest or not, he got well advertised.

All this stirring of social thought betokened a wider, richer, and more varied experience of life, whose fulness, nevertheless, would strain weak minds to folly. And foolish enough were some of the amateur philosophers who now began to paddle about infinity in their cock-boats and cast out their plummets to sound the bottom of things. Earnest triflers they were on subjects too vast for them: atheists on the edge showing off their bravado,—talkers, but not doers; social chatterers, each critical of his fellows, and all inclined to patronize the incomprehensible, as a visitor pats the chained house-dog. New England culture brought such minds to the keenest edge, and a suburb of New England's Athens was the Academe for a transcendental school of this character. It came into notice with a name bestowed no one knew when 1839. or where, and a platform which only outside scoffers defined when they said that whatever was unintelligible was sure to be transcendental. A few bold thinkers were tied up into the same bundle with shallow imitators, cranks, odd sticks and originals, having one crazy notion or another. Against organized society these asserted individualism; each demanded a pedestal of his own to stand upon. Here were men, unable to make a living, who preached that taxation was a grievance, spinsters inveterate who glowed with the wrongs that women endured in wedlock, sentimental friends of humanity who at home were the hardest of all persons to live with. The cracked bell, that listened to its own tongue, was not the unfit symbol of such a reformer. He affected some striking conceit; he lived in the woods to escape society; he wore green spectacles, or a white hat, or strange garments, or long hair, or a beard untrimmed for conscience' sake, or he would part his hair in the middle so as to resemble the humanized Saviour. Of all this singular folk and of radicals and moral reformers generally, the leader was Ralph Waldo Emerson, a man of unquestioned sanity and a shrewd

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sense of humor, whose influence long outlasted the crude school of these early disciples. Emerson was a gentle and genial observer of mankind, a botanist among way-side originals, or, to pervert one of his favorite metaphors, a star for queer people to hitch their wagons to. A Unitarian clergyman to whom Christian truths seemed narrow, he left the pulpit to live the life of an idealist, to write and lecture out of the ledger of his thoughts. Like Carlyle, his English friend and contemporary, he was drawn from English philosophy and the materialism of Bentham and Locke to the German school of nebulous thought and criticism. Goethe was an inspiration to him, nor was he uninfluenced by the poetic instinct of Coleridge and Wordsworth; but later studies made him an eclectic, who ransacked all times and all countries for moral apothegms, and thought Plato the greatest of mankind. He rebelled against the inductive philosophy of the age, founded on custom and utility, and set up intuition and innate ideas in its place. "Seeing whatever I can, and telling what I see," was the function of the sage, as he defined it; of the argumentative process he knew nothing, nor could he frame a scheme either of politics or philosophy. His teaching was by fragmentary suggestion; he coined maxims and proverbs tinted with his fine humor and picturesque expression, and whatever he uttered was in the strain of the sibyl. In vain was his style copied by those whose oracles had the incoherence of the tripod without the kernel of prophetic insight. Emerson himself, tall, slender, and willowy, with his thin, serene face, blue eyes, sedate expression, and gentle manners, making a bounty of his lineage as a scholar descended from scholars, and living simply as his slender means compelled him to, enforced his teachings happily by his high example. His domestic life was loving, his morals were chaste, and, unlike Carlyle, he compelled the age without scolding; and though as heterodox and counter to current opinion as Garrison, Phillips, or Theodore Parker, those indignant champions of the oppressed, his startling abstractions had no sting of personal allusion. At the same time he was not a man of

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practical methods, nor did he believe much in reforms by legislation; but his mission, as he viewed it, was to give impulse and teach self-reliance. Idiosyncrasy was his means of impression, and idiosyncrasy he developed in others.

In this era of agitation in American society Emerson's influence, though serene as a sunbeam, grew very great. His part was to disperse the shams of the day, to keep our people from becoming crusted over by precedent and tarnished by conservatism. The danger of such teachings consisted in weakening all reverence for established things, in disposing men to begin the world all over, as it were, and, placing the individual above society and laws, to indulge an impious selfishness. These new radicals who protest against the cant of society may yet have a cant among themselves; they may talk of "bibles," but for the common people there remains one Bible or none. As a sect, Transcendentalism was short-lived. The *Dial*, a paper for which Emerson wrote, with the brilliant Margaret Fuller and Thoreau, the self-sick Crusoe of Walden woods, lasted only four years. The queer Brook Farm experiment which succeeded it died the death of all genteel communities guided by quill-driving ploughmen; Hawthorne, one of the number, raising rich literary produce from his dung-fork studies, which he had never treated very seriously; for he at heart was no reformer, but a masterly dissector of character in its morbid moods.* But Emerson still influenced a widening circle of northern thought;† he had echoes all his life, and young men of genius or culture drank in his inspiration. The medley men and women he bound together came gradually into the abolition cause, and whatever other reform promised greater scope to the individual. To the same anti-slavery end tended the lyceum lecture, in which Emerson and Phillips were pre-eminent, and the common sympathy of all persons at odds with

* See Hawthorne's Blithedale Romance.

† Lives of Emerson by Cabot, Cooke, and Holmes; also 10 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 345, 350.

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our society and unpractical in their methods. But the great common-sense majority for many years passed these by with a shrug of the shoulders. Slaveholders derided this crack-brained amalgam, as they viewed it, of abolition, free-love, and blasphemy, and a conservative North half coincided with them. This was a great, intelligent, sensual, and avaricious America (so Emerson himself described it), bigoted to the respectabilities of education and religion. Material prosperity was its aim, and the triumphs of inductive science its chief glory. But all the same it was a sensible and practical America; it had a conscientious reverence for the foundations of law and religion, and a conscientious belief that outside those foundations this splendid fabric of Union, so essential to the safety and happiness of millions of the human race, would crumble into fragments.

Section II.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-SIXTH CONGRESS.

March 4, 1839—March 3, 1841.

Two subjects at this time added to the anxieties of Van Buren's administration as it struggled through the fog of inherited policies. One was the northeast boundary, the other our war with the Florida Indians. In both respects Van Buren's management was prudent, but did not redound to his glory.

To speak, first, of the northeast boundary. The award by the King of the Netherlands under our conven-
1831. January. tion of 1827 with Great Britain* far from settled the long controversy; for instead of deciding in favor of either contestant, the arbiter ran a compromise line of his own which no proof could justify. Great

* Vol. iii, p. 393. The King of the Netherlands lost half his kingdom after his selection as umpire, and was no longer the independent sovereign to whom the question had originally been referred.

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Britain was well enough pleased, but not this country; the United States protested, while Maine blazed with wrath at the thought of being amputated. In this situation of affairs the inhabitants of Madawaska, in the disputed territory, elected a representative to the Maine legislature; whereupon the British provincial authorities sent a military force, and arresting three persons most prominent in the election, lodged them in jail; but the prisoners were soon released, and, upon President Jackson's presentation of the whole case, our Senate, after discussing and rejecting various plans, advised him to open a new negotiation for adjusting this boundary.* Jackson did so; but no progress had been made with Great Britain when Van Buren entered office and found this, next to Texas, the most pressing subject pending in the State department. Day by day the situation grew critical on the Canadian border; Maine chafed at delays over which a State could exert no control; the uneasiness spread as far west as the Niagara frontier. The next year there were rebellious disturbances in Upper Canada against the British rule;† those concerned in them were hopeful of being annexed to the United States, and many American citizens near the line hastened to assist in the revolution. Our President issued a proclamation enjoining strict neutrality upon good citizens, and warning all who chose to engage in such criminal enterprises that instead of any public interference on their behalf they must expect to be dealt with according to Great Britain's measure of her own clemency. To this timely advice the rout of the Canadian insurgents and their credulous allies near Ogdensburg soon gave point.‡ But suddenly another trouble sprang up at the

September. 1832. January. 1837. 1838. Nov. 21.

* 2 Statesman's Manual.

† Popular discontent showed earlier signs in Lower Canada, where an insurrection broke out in November, 1837, under a French leader of eloquence, Papineau; it was speedily suppressed like this later one.

‡ 54 and 55 Niles's Register; New York newspapers.

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northeastern quarter. A large band of lawless men, chiefly from the adjoining British provinces, trespassed upon that part of the territory in dispute between the United States and Great Britain which was watered by the Aroostook and claimed to belong to Maine, and cut a large quantity of timber. The governor of Maine, under authority of the legislature, despatched an agent to the scene; he was seized by the trespassers and taken as a prisoner to Fredericton. A sharp correspondence ensued between the Maine and New Brunswick authori-
1839. ties, and inadmissible pretensions were set up on both sides. Maine drafted troops and drove off the intruders. Intense excitement prevailed on the border; the clash of arms was imminent. But it belonged to higher authorities than those of a State or province to settle such questions. Just before adjournment, Congress armed the President with full powers,* and General Winfield
February. Scott was despatched to the scene of strife. Scott's mission was successful. With General Harvey, the lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick, he arranged that the disputed territory should remain occupied as before, each government holding part while the other denied its legal title. In this arrangement Governor Fairfield, of Maine, acquiesced; a local clash of arms was averted,
March. and the whole subject lodged once more where it rightfully belonged, in the control of the United States and Great Britain. But though quiet was restored, the spirit on our northern frontiers remained hostile, impatient of England's tardiness. Van Buren wished to combine the settlement of the northeast boundary with that of the northwest, near Lake Superior, which was also ill-defined. At one time he inclined to send a special minister to London;† but Lord Palmerston preferring to negotiate at Washington, this idea was abandoned. Such were America's

* Act March 3, 1839.

† It is said that the President had the selection of Daniel Webster for this special mission under serious consideration; 2 Curtis's Webster, 2, 3.

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first dealings with a British queen and the sex whose reign gives England a triple glory; for Victoria was crowned at Westminster Abbey just as our President met his first abasement with the bankrupt deposit banks.* British-American policy was in these days a masterly one: it favored and defended while imposing no burdens on the colonies; it fostered rivalries between England's eastern provinces and the Canadas, but at the same time encouraged their common animosity to the United States.† Abuses which had led to the late petty rebellions in the Canadas were soon corrected under the guidance of a wise governor-general, Lord Durham; and to speak without folly, British annexation to the American Union was farther off in this nineteenth century than it had been in the eighteenth.

1837.

1838-40.

Next, concerning our war with the Florida Indians or Seminoles. This was the last serious obstruction offered by our Indian population to the national plan, nearly carried out already, of transferring them bodily to the west side of the Mississippi. Farther and farther removed from the encroaching surge of civilized settlement, their cries grew fainter, and their chastisement, when necessary, henceforth devolved upon the United States regulars, our only professional soldiers. Seldom again, as in earlier days, was the war-whoop to pierce with alarm, even in border villages; for the tribal alliances were ruptured and Indian wars from henceforth were skirmishes which occasion might force at the outposts of distant reservations. President Jackson's imperious orders had taken effect in all quarters save one. Far down at the peninsula of sandy Florida a last stand was made by Osceola and his Seminoles for the abiding-place of their ancestors. The war was a bloody and expensive one; lasting seven years, costing some twenty millions or more as another item to score under the purchase-price of these old Spanish dominions, and baffling some of the best and bravest American generals. The treaty for the transfer of these tribes to the

1832-37.

* President's Messages, 1839.

† 10 Adams's Diary, 354.

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far West, signed in 1832, ratified in '34, postponed at the solicitation of their chiefs till '36, and then solemnly renewed, the Seminoles broke with treachery and massacre. The war which followed was bequeathed by Jackson to Van Buren after it had lasted some eighteen months. He sent fresh men and supplies into Florida; General Jessup conquered the Seminoles in open fight; but dispersing in small parties, and favored by the climate and impenetrable swamps to which they were accustomed, they became a formidable banditti to all white settlers of the region about Florida and Southern Georgia. Large appropriations were made for this war by the late Congress;* but the enemy could not be crushed out. For this costly and cruel war, in which blood-hounds were once used, Van Buren was loaded with obloquy, just as he was called a British tool for checking the American raids into Canada. Black Hawk's tour and the pathetic tale of the Cherokees had excited in the North a sentimental pity for the Indian race, strongest, like that for the negro, in States unembarrassed by his neighborhood. This same sentiment exalted Osceola, the Seminole chief, like Black Hawk, into a patriot hero, bloodthirsty and perfidious though he certainly was. Armed occupation of the soil by white settlers, a policy advised by Secretary Cass and army officers of experience, took at last the place of troops and military campaigns, and brought this prolonged struggle to the usual close, every Indian war ending sooner or later in the red man's subjugation.†

1837-39.

The House was the scene of a singular strife when the twenty-sixth Congress assembled. The general-ticket system by which voters at large in a State and not those of separate districts chose their representatives to Congress—a plan since discarded for good reasons, but which gave unity and force to a delega-

1839. Dec. 2.

* Act March 3, 1839.

† Executive Docs., Twenty-sixth Congress; 2 Statesman's Manual; 2 Benton's View.

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tion—prevailed at this time in New Jersey. Six persons had thus been chosen to the present House, only one of whom, Randolph, a Whig, had received an undisputed majority. All six of the Whig candidates, however, were declared elected, and to them the governor issued the usual certificates impressed with the "broad seal of the State." The Democrats of New Jersey disputed this seal and the five certificates which had been given to Randolph's colleagues; they claimed that five Democratic candidates, instead, were properly elected, and appealed for proof to the official returns, which, according to the Whig version of the case, had been falsified. The point at issue was very earnestly discussed by the party press up to the day when Congress assembled and long after; and the importance of the issue, as a national one, lay in the fact that the great parties would be so nearly balanced in the new House that five Whig delegates from New Jersey might, if permitted to vote, organize that branch of Congress against the administration. 1838.

Hugh A. Garland, of Virginia, the clerk of the previous House, had held his post but a year, supplying a vacancy, and was a candidate for re-election. He had his own nervous fears to consult, his own friends to please. Upon this officer it devolved to take the chair and call over the roll when the new House assembled. Beginning with Maine, as the usage was, he went through the list for the New England States and New York, and then came to New Jersey. After calling the name of Randolph, he informed the House that there were five other seats from this State, which were contested, and, not feeling himself authorized to decide this contest, he would pass over the names and proceed with the call until a House should be formed to decide the question. To his surprise an eager debate sprang up at once, and then he declared that he could put no question till the House was organized. He refused even to put a motion to adjourn; but, members leaving the hall as by one impulse, time was gained on both sides for reflection. 1839. Dec. 2.

But the next day made the situation no better. The

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clerk persisted in a course which, under color of a modest
Dec. 3. disclaimer, had really disfranchised a State entitled to vote in organizing the House by one set of delegates or the other, and then blocked the wheels to make the House yield to him. Garland tried to read a statement of his reasons for pursuing what he conceived his duty, and the day was wasted in debating whether he might do so. Again did the House adjourn in spite of him.
Dec. 4. The third day was wasted in vain efforts to clear this New Jersey blockade, and at its close the clerk yielded so far as to put the question of adjournment.* The fourth day arrived, and now John Quincy Adams, who had sat a patient listener up to this point, took the difficulty in hand, as many members of both parties had in
Dec. 5. their distress besought him to do. It was after much debate had taken place, desultory but bitter, that he rose in his place. In a moment the House was hushed to hear what he had to say. "Mr. Clerk," said the honored member from Massachusetts, and obtaining the floor he directed his address to the members-elect before him. He arose, he proceeded to say, under a painful sense of duty. The clerk, in the discharge of his own duty, had refused to proceed with the call in accordance with usage, and had refused to put questions to this body. And what was our predicament? We were fixed as firmly and immovably as these columns: we could neither go forward nor backward. "But I say," continued Adams, with increasing passion, "that we have solemn duties, too, and the first duty is to organize. It is in the power of this House to set the clerk aside; thank God, it is not in its power to obey his despotic dictates! If we cannot organize in any other way,—if this clerk will not consent to our discharging the trusts confided to us by our constituents,—then let us imitate the example of the Virginia House of Burgesses when the colonial governor ordered it to disperse, and like men——" Here the House and galleries broke

* See Constitution, Art. 1, § 5, on the point of adjourning without a quorum. And see 10 J. Q. Adams's Diary, December, 1839.

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into a spontaneous cheer, and the effect which his speech produced could be no longer doubtful. Adams had pointed the true road out of this entanglement, and he now offered a resolution ordering the clerk to call the names of those members from New Jersey who had produced credentials from the governor. To this resolution, he added, any member might offer an amendment, and so bring the question to an immediate issue. "How shall the question be put?" "Who will put the question?" was heard from different parts of the hall. Still holding the floor, Adams replied, in a piercing voice which was heard above the tumult, "I intend to put the question myself." That one sentence brought order out of chaos, and restored the equipoise of the House. The knot was cut for Adams even before he could put the question, and by members, too, opposed in politics, who respected him for his wisdom and courage. The clerk made a faint effort for the last time to define his position, but the uproar was too great. "Organize without him!" was the cry. Rhett then leaped upon one of the desks and moved that Lewis Williams take the chair, the oldest member of this body. Williams's objection was scarcely heard, so loud was the call for "Adams! Adams!" Quick as a flash Rhett substituted the name of John Quincy Adams, and then put his own motion to vote, which was carried with a thundering "Aye!" The clerk submitted to the situation; Adams was conducted to the chair to preside until the House should be duly organized; and though there was acrimony still, the business proceeded with decorum.*

The House deciding to suspend the New Jersey contest until a Speaker had been chosen, a combination of the Whigs and malcontents chose Robert M. T. Hunter, of Virginia, after a long struggle. He was elected on the eleventh ballot, receiving 119 votes out of 232. By a close vote the House completed its list of officers, Garland being re-elected clerk through

Dec. 5–10.

Dec. 20–23.

* See 10 Adams's Diary; 57 Niles's Register; Congressional Debates; newspapers of the day.

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the exclusion of the New Jersey Whigs. Meanwhile, the Senate had adjourned from day to day. At last the joint announcement was made, and on the day before Christmas, during a heavy snow-storm which blocked its transmission to the press at large, the President's message was sent in to Congress, having stood for three weeks in type at the *Globe* office.*

Dec. 23–24.

In this message, devoted chiefly to financial topics, the President pressed once more his plan of an independent Treasury. Upon this measure the administration now rallied its friends, for something should be accomplished before the impending national canvass. The prostration of all banks south and west of New York favored this act of divorce. A second time had the curtailed monster of a National Bank suspended payment, crushing by its fall a whole hecatomb of minion institutions which were staggering behind; its drafts dishonored abroad and scandals spreading of its ballooning exploits which all at last seriously believed. These suspensions had relieved the specie-paying banks of New York and New England from late fears of oppression; their condition in the main was sound, though in all the State systems there were great defects, the greatest of all being the want of uniformity. In a juncture not unfavorable, then, Wright, pursuant to the President's wishes, brought his bill promptly before the Senate for the fourth time, and a specie clause was added, to the effect that all dealings of the United States should be in gold and silver. This measure, though long and earnestly opposed, passed the Senate by a fair majority, as it had passed before.† Through the House, the scene of its former fate, it made its difficult way, helped from stage to stage by the pressure of the previous question. On the last day of June the bill was finally carried.‡ This act,

1839. October.

1840. Jan. 23.

* Debates of Congress; 10 Adams's Diary; 57 Niles, and other newspapers.

† By 24 to 18.

‡ By 124 to 107.

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the only important one of the present Congress, or perhaps of this administration,* bore an inoffensive title, which avoided all the cant phrases of the day, such as "divorce of Bank and State," "sub-treasury," and "independent treasury." Its description was "to provide for the collection, safe-keeping, transfer, and disbursement of the public revenue," and to this end vaults and safes were to be supplied in the new Treasury building at the capital, and at mints or custom-houses in the leading cities. New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Charleston, New Orleans, and St. Louis were to be the centres of deposit; four receivers-general and two keepers of mints, together with the treasurer of the United States, being the public custodians.† Such was the first outline of our sub-treasury system, soon swept away in the vicissitudes of parties, but afterwards solidly re-established. To give this enactment as imposing an effect as possible the President approved it on the 4th of July, and the Van Buren Democracy hailed the reform with bells and cannon as a new declaration of independence. Jackson, from the Hermitage, had written an open letter of approval while the bill was pending.‡ But the sub-treasury came too late to turn the adverse tide of Van Buren's fortunes; and the untried experiment cost him, in the autumn, more votes, probably, than it gained for him. June 30.

Within the past year the mercantile tone of the country had relapsed into general despondency, new bank suspensions being a result rather than the source of trouble; spring business disappointed expectation; money was scarce when plenty had been looked for; stocks were dull, cotton and other staples declined, the Bank of England contracted its loans, and American borrowers were quite out of favor abroad. Our capitalists in the lucid interval had unloaded their canal and railway projects 1839.

* A new pre-emption act for settlers on the public lands gained for this bill some votes from western members. See act June 1, 1840.

† Act July 4, 1840.

‡ Statesman's Manual; 57 Niles; Congressional Globe.

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upon the State wherever they could, and States found themselves saddled with monstrous debts suddenly contracted. Resumption proved simply a cupping process with banks of the weaker sort, draining their resources to the last drop. The old swollen limits of credit could not possibly be maintained, and sound banks rapidly lessened the volume of their circulation. Banks did not co-operate, but eyed one another with jealousy and distrust. In the crash and wreck of private fortunes the call was loud for a general bankrupt law, but bankruptcy for the banks chiefly interested the party in power, and there was a tincture of vindictiveness in the proposal. Nothing impressed the people more in the midst of these troubles than the conviction that this administration could not, or would not, lend a helping hand.

1839-40. Clay has left a pathetic description of the current financial condition in a speech he delivered at the present session. The general government was in debt, the people in debt, while the means of extinguishing this vast mass of debt were constantly diminishing. Property was falling in value, all the great staples declining in price, the products of agriculture unable to find their way to market from the want of purchasing means in the hands of traders or from the want of confidence in the stability of things. Many factories were stopped or stopping, those especially in the woollen industry, and their fabrics accumulated on hand. Such wretched currency as the people had consisted almost entirely of bank issues in the utmost disorder, ranging from par to fifty per cent. discount, while domestic exchanges were in such confusion that between marts so close together as New York and Philadelphia the rate vacillated between seven and ten per cent. "Such," he added, "is the unexaggerated picture of our present condition; and amidst the dark and dense cloud that surrounds us I perceive not one gleam of light."*

The long session of Congress was prolonged far into

* See 2 Benton's View, 164.

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July, in angry crimination; for the Presidential battle had begun. For months the cuttle-fish of the New Jersey contest drew its inky stain through the House, but at last the Whig claimants were refused, and the Democratic ones seated, in open affront, to use the campaign shibboleth, of "the broad seal of the State." Whigs now opened their battery of inquisition upon the White House and its occupant. Defalcations—not the self-exposed ones only, but those which high officials covered up for the sake of political friends—were found or imagined. Swartwout, the embezzler, Van Buren had superseded by no ideal collector at New York in Jesse Hoyt. The soft-spoken President could not plant himself before the door of Congressional investigation as the hero had done.* Powerful speakers in the popular branch for two years lashed his record without mercy,—southerners who had joined the Whigs, among them such as the conservative Bell, the fiery Wise, and Prentiss, of Mississippi, that meteor of eloquence soon to disappear. Spoils of office, too, were denounced, and the perversion of the patronage to party use, that pernicious practice with which Van Buren had been identified all his life, and in which, as many believed, his own patron had been his pupil. Costly expenditures were charged, and official profligacy everywhere. No speech more effective for the canvass was made than that of young Ogle, of Pennsylvania, who died in his early fame; it pictured the White House as a royal palace, splendid as that of the Cæsars, and occupied by a Democratic ruler the very incarnation of the aristocracy; and its art lay in the high embellishment of truthful details taken from the steward's accounts. All were described; the President's establishment was turned inside out; from the steeds in his stables to the golden goblet and spoons on the table of his banquet-hall. A mean advantage it was, but a real one, to take in these distressful times; for Van Buren, though a man of pecuniary integrity, liked the dainty elegance of life, and

1839–40.

* See Jackson's letter, 51 Niles, 370.

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contrived that the cost of official entertainment should be met by the public while he saved out of his salary.* There were fisticuffs on the floor of the House during these Whig exposures; and one night the right arm of the figure of justice over the entrance door came down with a crash.†

Let us leave this dome-crowned amphitheatre, with its gladiators, and look upon the political battle which has been raging for many months. On the very day when Adams stretched his Prospero wand over the House‡ the Whig national convention chose its officers, and the next day selected a Whig commander. That commander, that party nominee for President, was the brave old soldier and patriot, William Henry Harrison, of Ohio. Popular throughout the northwest, with whose earlier frontier struggles he had been identified, he had been kept by that section in the front rank of Whig candidates ever since, four years before, he proved himself Van Buren's hardest opponent. In the summer of 1837 a Whig State convention of Ohio proposed him boldly. A year later he made a tour of Ohio and Indiana, stirring up enthusiasm wherever he went, and speaking delicately of his rivals as their elder, but not their equal. Anti-Masons this same year, under the leadership of Thaddeus Stevens, nominated him at Philadelphia. Other signs of his preference to the greater candidates, Clay and Webster, were shown in guiding States like Pennsylvania. With Tippecanoe clubs and battle anniversaries the common imagination was kindled in 1839 before the Whig convention met at Harrisburg in the last month of that year to decide between the names presented, and Harrison had already announced himself

1839. Dec. 4–7.

1837. July 4.

1838. July-Aug.

November.

1839.

Dec. 4.

* See Shepard's Van Buren, 337.

† 10 J. Q. Adams, 220. Adams thought this an ominous circumstance.

‡ *Supra*, p. 322.

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ready to obey the summons of the people. In a plain Lutheran church, newly erected, this national convention was held on the 4th of December, and its session lasted four days. The veteran James Barbour, of Virginia, was its permanent chairman. As between party candidates for President the selection was delicate, but this question was paramount, Who would best unite the fragmentary opposition and lead the new party to victory? A plurality, if not a clear majority, of the present delegates were in favor of Henry Clay, whose warm leadership and consummate talent and experience entitled him fairly to the first honors. But incessant political warfare, which keeps one on a plane with friends and foes, is a hindrance from reaching that highest altitude to which public ambition aspires; and there were other hindrances besides. The Whig barometer, which was always variable, kept the weatherwise uneasy. In State elections Maine, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Georgia, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, had just gone against them; and even in Massachusetts a Whig liquor law had cost Everett his re-election, and brought in Marcus Morton, a Democrat, as governor by a majority of one.* The Whig vote had fallen off in Vermont. In New Jersey the party held the legislature, with a strong majority against it in the popular vote. In New York the Whig majority appeared on a test to have been cut down from 15,000 in 1837 to 10,000 in '38 and 4000 in '39. In neither Virginia nor North Carolina had their cause a sure footing. Thus did it seem as if the advantages of the past two years were slipping from their grasp. All this tended to make Clay's best friends timorous of his chances. Southern anti-tariff Whigs and western squatters had prejudices against him, and so had anti-Masons and anti-slavery men, besides other fractions in this piebald opposition. Clay himself understood the doubts and difficulties

Dec. 4–7.

* This Massachusetts "fifteen-gallon" act, which forbade liquors to be retailed in smaller quantities than fifteen gallons, was held up to odium for discriminating between rich and poor, and the law was speedily repealed.

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over his selection. In public speeches he had besought his party friends to move in concert, and if his own name was an obstacle to unite upon another. "I would rather be right than President" was the striking response, long remembered of him, when a friend in the Senate cautioned him about being so prominent in the warfare of legislation. But in his heart he had swung between hope and despondency; he wanted above all things to be the standard-bearer in this canvass, and at the last moment he protested against the arrangements in this convention which were formed to exclude him.*

Three names, to be brief, were prominent in this convention,—Clay, Harrison, and Winfield Scott, all men of different States, yet born each of them in Virginia. Webster, strong in New England, but in no other section, had in his heart's sorrow gone abroad, declining from London to be a candidate.† Aided by delegates from States in which the Whigs did not count at all, Clay, on a formal ballot, would have led and most likely been nominated; but this was prevented by a rule of the convention which set the several State delegations to balloting informally and then comparing notes, repeating this process until some candidate receiving a majority could be reported to the convention. The product of this mechanism
Dec. 6. was Harrison, who was reported and proclaimed the nominee for President late in the evening of the third day.‡ It was the uncertain pulse of the middle and northwestern States which deprived Clay of the most signal opportunity of his life. The ticket next
Dec. 7. day was completed by the unanimous choice of John Tyler, of Virginia. He was present in person as a member of the convention, and was said to have cried when Clay, his favorite, was defeated. Those tears decided what turned out the most essential part of the whole programme; for the triumphant Harrisonians rushed to heal the wounds

* Clay's Private Correspondence, December, 1839.

† 2 Curtis's Webster.

‡ The vote stood: Harrison, 148; Clay, 90; Scott, 16.

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of Clay's devoted friends; it was a concession, too, to the South, to Democrats who had broken from Jackson on one issue or another. Tyler had a good record for this complimentary distinction; but as for his admiration for Clay, would that it had lasted. The convention dissolved with harmonious expressions, but no platform; the Whigs feeling, and justly so, that their ticket was splendidly made up for battle.*

Though Clay, like Webster, gave Harrison and Tyler a firm support, he felt keenly the prudent manipulation which had sacrificed him. The ballot plan in this convention was proposed by Sprague, of Massachusetts, in the name of his delegation. Massachusetts and New York delegates acted most probably in concert, and rumor has ascribed to Seward's influence what Clay's hottest partisans have called treachery. Of treachery there is no trace; but the general wish of the party was to achieve Whig ends by the safest means, and that wish dictated the course of this convention. In fact, New York's governor was now at Albany, a distance too great for conference with such a convention before the age of telegraphy. 1839. Weed and Greeley attended, however, and Weed's influence in shaping the final result was very great.† The alliance of Seward, Weed, and Greeley was a powerful one in the Empire State in Whig times to contend with the Albany regency, its natural antagonist. Their talents well blended to counteract their several faults. Seward, not yet turned of forty, slender and graceful, though unimposing, was the natural recipient of public honors; for he was well born, well educated, and blessed with an easy fortune. Identified,

* See 1 Tyler's Tyler; 2 Statesman's Manual; 55–57 Niles; Biographies of Greeley, Weed, Seward, Webster, etc. Leigh, of Virginia, who was thought of, refused to allow his name, and this left Tyler clear. Some, like Weed, preferred Clayton, of Delaware.

† See Greeley's Recollections, 131; Weed's Autobiography; 1 Seward's Biography. Weed makes some interesting revelations on this point, stating that he concerted with the Webster delegates after trying in vain to induce Clay to withdraw his name. See 10 Adams's Diary, 152.

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too, with the western section of the State, whose liberal impulses have pushed in turn the boldest reforms, his constituency was one to be gained over by any party of liberal ideas whose problem was to counterbalance the votes of the dense metropolitan Democracy. Young Seward was by nature humane and progressive, a born statesman of the sanguine and speculative school founded by Jefferson. His training and antecedents, indeed, were Jeffersonian; but anti-Masonry brought him into contact with John Quincy Adams at an impressionable age, and Adams's personal example became the guiding star of his existence. Seward soon came to detest slavery, though bearing himself like a philosopher; his nature was genial and attractive, and his art always remarkable in avoiding personal collision under whatever provocation, and yet wherever placed he did not fail to show at least the mettle of his conviction. He disliked pomp and ceremony, and it amused him in these early years to see how common men would pass him by and single out some man in the room of portly figure and imposing presence, like Granger or Fillmore, as their ideal of a chief magistrate. A generous and free liver, as his means enabled him to be, he was accustomed to spend all his official salary in maintaining his station, so that none could say that he made money in public employ. But while above all suspicion of greed or corruption, a foible was his disregard of public economies; for, like a true disciple of Adams, he inclined strongly to grand schemes of internal improvement which the State was to prop up, and his innate tendencies were to paternal and even prodigal government. This desire to enrich and benefit, however, was founded in his philosophy, and so was his optimism, which presented always the bright side of things. He had great faith and forecast, but with somewhat of that prophetic conceit which among fallible mortals leads in some momentous crisis to a false prediction. Most of his predictions startled by their truth, a few proved false; but the line between prophecy and policy was not always to be discerned in his conduct of affairs, for his worst fears were expressed in private confidence,

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while he seemed always to lead on the people from hope to hope. In this is true statesmanship, and Seward never forgot in the sage a statesman's limitations to the best attainable rather than the greatest abstract good. Seward's friend, Thurlow Weed, was of a coarser fibre, but resolute, devoted to his friends, full of energy, persistent, shrewd, and not over-scrupulous, a man of the machine, and robust in his partisanship as he was in physique. Such men are indigenous to American politics where the next power to the throne is the power behind it, and every great statesman needs his political manager to keep him in relation with his constituents. The political manager of these days was the journalist, whose reward came in the growth of his subscription-list and such rich jobs as that of the public printing. It was Weed who discovered Horace Greeley, a poor young printer and unthrifty editor, in the great city, and induced him to publish in Albany a Whig paper for the State campaign of 1838 styled the *Jeffersonian*. The admirable quality of Greeley's pen-work had attracted the notice of the shrewd party manager. Greeley's paper did well its part towards the election of Seward, and then Greeley returned to his crust and his attic. A young flaxen-haired youth, stooping, near-sighted, ill-dressed, and ill at ease in polished company, Greeley was a born journalist, of the kind to impress the public by his sincere and fervent convictions. Though hungering for some one of those snug salaried places which Seward now dispensed, but which he was too proud to ask for, he reaped the rewards of his new alliance in the field overlooked by many an aspirant, that which he was most fit for. Being a man of crotchets and philanthropic blunders, Greeley, open and susceptible as the day, embraced each new "ism" which promised to regenerate mankind. He was no practical administrator, and hence, superior as he was to Weed in mental calibre and loftiness of purpose, he could no more have filled Weed's place in politics than Weed could have filled his own.*

* See autobiographies of Seward, Weed, and Greeley.

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Among New York Democrats who had left Van Buren was Nathaniel Tallmadge, who was returned to the United States Senate by a Whig coalition after a sharp struggle in the legislature. In other States the Whigs combined with Democratic seceders and conservatives; Virginia, for instance, where Rives, Jackson's former minister to France, was re-elected to the Senate for a third term, while Tyler stood for Vice-President, and his friend, Thomas W. Gilmer, was chosen governor.* Gilmer, like Tyler, had fallen away from Jackson on the earlier issues of ultra State rights and the force bill. In Tennessee, after the choice of Polk as governor, the legislature had instructed the State delegation in Congress to support the sub-treasury bill; Hugh L. White, who resigned from the Senate in consequence, rather than vote against his own judgment, announced his support of the Harrison ticket, but died soon after. With lesser fragments like these kneaded up into the original mass, the Harrison party swelled rapidly until it seemed scarcely a party at all, but an upheaval of the people.

1839-40. 1840. 1839. 1840.

The national Democratic convention met at Baltimore on the 5th of May. Governor Carroll, of Tennessee, presided over it, twenty-one States being represented. With one voice Van Buren was renominated for President, as the country had anticipated; but for Vice-President no selection was made, a delicate rivalry having arisen, which the claimants managed finally to compose; Polk and Forsyth each retiring in favor of Richard M. Johnson, "Old Tecumseh." In spite of defection, union for the sake of harmony was the motto. More explicit than the Whigs, as they could afford to be, the Democrats put forth a platform which favored State rights, the divorce of the bank and the government, no National Bank nor assumption of State debts; and in an address to the people Van Buren's difficulties were recorded and the

1840. May 5.

* The governor was chosen by the legislature. There seems to have been some "deal" in this arrangement. See 1 Tyler's Tyler, 591.

party shielded itself behind the glory of his predecessor. In this manner were marshalled the hosts for battle; the Democrats barricaded behind the patronage, the opposition bearing down upon them in huge array like Judæa's army, singing and shouting as they approached.

The Presidential campaign which now began was in some respects the most remarkable in America's experience. None before or since was ever like it for enthusiasm and picturesque effect, and at the same time an utter negation of ultimate purpose. There was no purpose held out but to get rid of the old and bring in the new. There have been hard-fought campaigns upon exciting issues, those of 1800 and 1860 most of all; but in the wildfire element, in a contagious sort of zeal which was at once unreasoning, spontaneous, unsectional, and overwhelming, this of 1840 surpassed them all. Never was the reserved vote brought out so strongly; never did tidal wave show the ocean of populous humanity so stirred to its inner depths. The whole body of voters were in motion, stagnation giving plenty of leisure for politics; and from May to November it seemed as if all able-bodied citizens were going about in procession to attend mass-meetings and hear speakers. It was a revival, an awakening of converts by appeal to the heart; the long pull and the strong from scenes of misery and depression. The farmer left his plough, the mechanic his tools, the clerk and the merchant the desk and counter. Political gatherings were in the open air; men rallied on the camp-ground by the thousands and tens of thousands, many bringing their wives, their children, their whole families. What immense conventions, what stupendous processions were these! Crowds, all wrought up with enthusiasm, reckoned by the ten, the twenty, the fifty thousands, and more; seventy-five thousand made the boast of the grand Whig carnival at Bunker Hill, and a hundred thousand strong at Dayton, Ohio, where Harrison, the people's candidate, showed himself in person. Such throngs it was impossible to count; they could only be computed at so

1840. May–November.

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many deep to the acre. Processions, too, bearing grotesque emblems, such as the coon-skin, the cider-barrel, the log cabin, the ball which was set rolling on for many a league to the scene, in days when delegates had to travel by horse or on foot; towns and counties turning their population into a line of march frequently five miles long and sometimes stretching literally from one State into another. And what speakers were these who held the vast audience by the spell of their eloquence! Webster, Clay, Corwin, Prentiss, Preston, and hundreds of lesser note upon the Whig stump; all doing their best for the cause and candidate after the ticket had begun to demonstrate its winning strength. In stirring up such crowds, such processions, and such excitement, the Democrats emulated their adversaries; but they were left far behind. For the Whigs, in this first flush of their irresistible alliance, felt all the inspiration of carrying by assault; their one watchword was "reform," and reform was wanted. Attractive most of all was this campaign to the glowing youth of the country. What 1861 was in war, '40 was in politics; it drew more young men of good standing to the altar of their country than ever enlisted together before or since. The Harrisburg convention set the example in this by inviting the Whig young men of the Union to gather in mass at Baltimore at an appointed date in May; they did so by delegations arriving from every point of the compass; and to the thousands who gathered there the scene lived in the memory like a first love. If such association left the fresh Whigs of 1840 always a little tender of the national spirit, that tenderness may be pardoned.

In presenting General Harrison for President the Whig party had torn a page from the Jackson text-book, nor was it the last time they marched under a military chieftain. But Old Tippecanoe and Old Hickory were men of very different stripe, and so the people regarded them. Harrison's public experience had been fairly divided, in fact, between the civil and military; the one career served to set off the other; and in each capacity he had been brave and faithful, though not brilliant. A man of epau-

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lettes and strong will would not have fitted the new emergency; of such the people were weary; but a plain, fair-minded, patriotic, and virtuous soldier who would sit in the chair and administer affairs patiently in harmony with Congress. The subterfuge of the Whigs in fighting without platform or principles was exposed by the Van Buren orators; their candidate, it was said, had a padlock over his mouth and was allowed no pen, ink, nor paper. This charge brought Harrison upon the stump once or twice, where his frank and well-chosen utterances disarmed such criticism and left a good impression. A one-term candidate he had clearly pledged himself in the first place. He now repeated, what in letters and speeches he had said sufficiently before the convention met, that he believed in banks, a credit system, and paper currency, and that all executive usurpation and the prostitution of the offices he utterly detested.* This in reality was the Whig platform, so far as the Whigs themselves knew it; their chief stand was to stem the current of Executive abuses of power; but as to the means of re-establishing credit and a currency, and whether or not to return to a National Bank, they knew themselves divided. They were willing to postpone plans to a victory, or as the phrase was, wait to see what the people would call for. The candidates partook of this caution.†

An accident appears to have given to this canvass the high coloring which most distinguished it. One of the Democratic journals, in scoffing at the idea of electing such mediocrity to the Presidential office, smartly advised that Harrison be given a log cabin and a barrel of cider, and he would stay content in Ohio. The sneer was quickly caught up by the Whigs; as often happens, the taunt was turned into an emblem of victory. Old Tippecanoe was proclaimed the "log-cabin candidate." Log cabins sprang up in nearly every city; log-cabin raisings and house-warmings were held with music and appropriate speeches;

* See 57 and 58 Niles, also 54 ib., 398; 55 ib., 360.

† 59 Niles, 56, 70, etc.; papers of the day.

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log-cabin medals were struck off; miniature log cabins were carried about in Whig processions, some made from buckeye trees on the candidate's farm; large log cabins on wheels were drawn from afar to the mass-gatherings by strong teams of horses, with bunks for the delegates to sleep in, cider barrels in front, and live coons sporting on the roof. The log cabin, with its cider barrel, which stood at the door, its coon-skin nailed by its side, its latch-string which admitted the welcome guest and was never pulled in,—all such insignia were contrasted with the ruffled shirt and dainty clothes of the palace occupant, who was profuse at the public cost, and fed from the golden spoon in the midst of satin chairs and damask sofas. Log-cabin pictures, magazines, and song-books were hawked about. A cheap campaign paper styled the *Log Cabin*, set up under the auspices of the Whig State committee of New York, won a rapid popularity unparalleled in campaign literature, running up its weekly circulation to the then prodigious figures of 80,000; and Horace Greeley, its editor, turned the skill and reputation he gained by it into his own famous paper, the *Tribune*, which he founded to succeed it.*

That log cabin, with its contrast and lively accompaniments, took a wonderful hold of the popular imagination.
1840. It recalled frontier days, hard struggles, and simple manners, helpful to remember in days of financial distress and gathering corruption. It allied the honest Harrison with those free settlements of the northwest whose development was our proudest national boast. It was an emblem wholly American. And one must own, with a smile, the stroke of genius by which this party of the gentry and moneyed men took on the dress of the plain farmer and poor man and exposed the Democracy and its little leader to obloquy, as placemen and aristocrats who were growing rich and purse-proud upon the spoils of office. A flood of pictorial caricature impressed the lesson left by the minute items of Ogle's catalogue. "Van, won't you help raise this log cabin?" "No, because I live

* Newspapers of the day; biographies of Seward, Weed, and Greeley.

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in a palace and drive a handsome coach." The soft and demure qualities of "Matty," or little Van, whose undersize forbade always the heroic, served as a foil to set off his reputed cunning; he was seen escaping from the White House, "the flying Dutchman," as "Old Tip's" canoe paddled towards it; in a log cabin fitted with a fallen trap his bland face peered out of the window as the captured fox; a banner borne in the procession with five cabalistic K's gave mysterious omen of his approaching fate.* Other caricatures and emblems impressed the contrast: there was Harrison, the hero, building his stockade fort, or riding his charger to battle; Harrison, the simple farmer, ploughing his field, or welcoming old comrades at the cabin door; and all the time the ball was rolling on and over prostrate Democrats, among whom was Benton, with the knife in hand which had killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. But besides mottoes and catchwords for the laborer were campaign songs, sung in lusty chorus and never to be forgotten. These were more effective than speech or picture, when Harrison minstrels, wearing their hunting shirts, trolled off the verses. Many of these songs adapted popular tunes and verses which have served before and since; but the song of songs could no more be reproduced than the log cabin itself. It was droned off to a sort of chant, known as the "Little Pig's Tail," to which was fitted a short seesaw verse, capable of ingenious extemporizing to suit the audience, which ran at the fourth line into a chorus of stumbling repetitions, whose burden was "For Tippecanoe and Tyler too."†

The effect of all this was irresistible. The Whigs fairly sang and hooted Van Buren into retirement. It was like the breach made in Jericho's walls at the blowing of the trumpet and the great shout. Justice to the enemy under such circumstances was of course out of the question. In vain did the Democrats invoke a sober discussion

* "Kinderhook kandidate kant kome it kuite." See 59 Niles; also Log Cabin and other current newspapers; 1 Seward, 495–500.

† See this song, 59 Niles, 156, copied, with others, from the New York Herald.

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of principles; in vain, by argument, by appeal, by rebuff, by imitation even of such campaign methods, by all the skilful tactics and brave means of defence they could muster, fight off these crowds and this craze. All praise, all apology, was wasted upon the people; to hard money the answer was hard times; they were outtalked, outroared, outsung, and when the time came they found themselves outvoted. The Virginia spring election opened the first bud of promise, nipped in this instance by the autumn frost. All other States the Whigs had hoped for were more than theirs. The local election returns received through the summer from North Carolina, Kentucky, Indiana, and other States showed that the Jackson dynasty was toppling. Jackson himself, perceiving it, made desperate effort by letter and speech to save his own State at least, but there White's ghost conjured better than Old Hickory in the flesh. Maine was redeemed, Pennsylvania chose a Democratic governor by a narrow margin of a majority. In these days the scattered fire of a Presidential campaign was very great. The welkin rang with answering guns, as State elections followed in turn from March to November, and then the Presidential balloting extended far into November, with no uniform day. Ohio and Pennsylvania led off in the national decision; New York, midway on the list, chose State officers and Presidential electors on the same day. When it was known that both Pennsylvania and New York, those anxious States, had gone for the Whigs, Harrison's election was assured. Yet the sum total when finally footed up showed a triumph which astounded the most sanguine of the party conquerors. Harrison and Tyler had swept the whole Union, excepting the seven States of New Hampshire, Virginia, South Carolina, Alabama, Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas; 234 electoral votes in all against 60, which were cast for Van Buren, and less than that number for Johnson as Vice-President.* The popular vote

1840.

September.

October.

November.

October–November.

* See Electoral Tables, Appendix.

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and popular majorities were immense beyond precedent, increased, of course, by the composite character of the opposition.

Never did American administration, when appealing to the country, receive so scathing a rebuke. It was not so much a reversal of financial systems that this verdict meant, though most of the majorities imputed present distress to the meddlesome warfare which Jackson began upon banks and the currency, but rather a profound disgust with the turmoil and tyranny of Executive misrule for the past eight years, and an impatient longing for some change which might restore the equilibrium of the constitution and a fraternal spirit. What seemed terrible under the hero had passed into contempt under his diminutive. Harrison personified old-fashioned integrity and moderation; and, turning to his genial virtues, North, South, East, and West, as by one impulse, broke from the spell of this dark Moloch of party imposture, to which they had paid blind sacrifice too long. It was the transitory moment of a higher inspiration.

Besides that stale reproach of Federalism, which by this time had blue-moulded, the Democracy had tried to make Whigs odious by calling them abolitionists. Jackson, who could pelt with epithets, gave this cue to his party, while Van Buren defended with solicitude the gag-rule of Congress. But the Whigs stood upon their own party record, and owed little to northern fanaticism. A third party, in fact, entered the field this very year to draw off abolition votes, and their intrusion into politics tended so plainly to mischief with the Whigs that many thought the President's sly hand was pulling the wires. Most probably, however, the game originated with the moral agitators alone. This "Liberty Party," as it styled itself, was founded in New York State, and held a national convention at Albany, where James G. Birney was nominated for President, and Thomas Earle for Vice-President. Birney was a native of Kentucky, and a former slaveholder, who had manumitted his slaves and moved north, settling

April.

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in free Michigan. The movement was too feeble this year to divert the absorbing canvass from the chief candidates. Many of the most earnest abolitionists, in truth, Garrison of the number, did not wish the anti-slavery cause polluted by politics at all, but nurtured as a moral reform; and over this and kindred questions anti-slavery societies were just at this time torn by factions. The "Liberty Party," throwing a trifling ballot in New York and Massachusetts, where its influence was strongest, made but a driblet in the vast popular vote of the Union.* What a prodigy it worked out four years later our narrative will show.

Among the joyful States which had broken out into bonfires were Massachusetts and New York. The long ticket had carried both States for the Whig cause in local elections. Annual rotation in the former State dropped Morton and installed John Davis in his place. Seward was re-elected governor of New York for two years, though by a diminished majority,—less by half than that polled for Harrison as President. An attached Whig, Seward's breadth and manly independence repelled the timid time-servers of his party. His judicial reforms offended the lawyers, his concessions to Irish Catholics on public-school and alien questions the Protestant and native American sentiment; and, finally he made dough-faced Whigs uneasy by arguing with the executive of Virginia on a delicate point without the usual deprecation. As to this last offence, three negro sailors on board a New York coaster were demanded for trial at Norfolk on a charge of stealing, or trying to steal, a fellow-negro from slavery, or rather inducing him to run away. It was not enough that the refugee was taken from his hiding-place on the schooner when it arrived at New York and sent back to his master, but the three free sailors of his complexion were demanded also for trial on the hostile soil. Governor Seward refused to surrender these men as fugitives from justice, both upon the defective proof against them and because as citizens of New York they were not

1839.

* See 2 Garrison's Life; Tables, American Almanac.

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liable to trial and punishment for what was not a crime by the laws of New York nor by the common law or the laws of nations. Gilmer, the new governor of Virginia, retorted with menaces, and other slaveholding States warmly espoused his side of the controversy; interference with southern property rights in the negro they declared could not be tolerated from any quarter. Seward calmly maintained his ground, and his State legislature declined to interfere. But when the governor of New York made a requisition upon Virginia, presently, for the surrender of a person charged with forgery, Gilmer refused to comply, saying that the three colored men must first be surrendered. This logic the Virginia legislature excepted to, and tried another means of retaliation, by enacting that all coasting vessels from New York should be subjected to inspection and seizure, until the three colored men were surrendered, and a law of New York was repealed, besides, which violated federal policy by extending to all persons claimed as fugitive slaves the benefit of a jury trial. The third governor engaged in the Virginian side of the controversy surrendered the forger and made a new demand for the negro sailors.*

1840.

1841.

This incident illustrates the perplexing social anomaly of this period, when fugitive slaves were from one aspect runaway cattle, and from another fellow-creatures who sought those natural rights which our system proclaimed inalienable. The "Amistad" case about this time wrung from our supreme tribunal the first if not the only substantial concession it made to the friends of the negro. A Spanish slaver, laden with its African cargo, sailed from Havana to a port on the northern coast of Cuba; the slaves rose in a body, killed the captain and one of the crew, the others escaping, and sparing the lives of two Spaniards, their purchasers, who were on board, ordered them to steer for Africa, their own native land, whence they had been stolen. The Spaniards deceived them, and heading the "Amistad" northward, brought the vessel into

1839.

* 1 Seward's Life, 463, 529, etc.

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Long Island Sound. A suit entered by the salvors of vessel and cargo brought the status of these negroes distinctly to a judicial issue. The Spanish minister had demanded them as human criminals, the purchasers claimed them as runaway and irresponsible property, while philanthropy pronounced them fellow-beings who followed nature's dictates in freeing themselves from oppressors who had deprived them of their liberty. This last view ultimately prevailed; the African slave-trade was piracy by the law of nations; the Spanish enslavers had violated international law, and these poor Africans were entitled to their liberty. The district court would have returned the negroes by a public vessel to the coast of Africa; but this the Supreme Court, upon appeal, would not order, though granting freedom, which was the essential object. John Quincy Adams stood before the tribunal of last appeal to plead the cause of these barbarian captives. It was thirty years since he had held a brief in that court of black-robed dignitaries, most of whom had gained their places in the interval by opposing him in politics.*

1841. March.

Adams's argument in the "Amistad" case was intermitted by the sudden death from heart-disease of Justice Philip P. Barbour, who occupied his seat on the first day of the hearing, attended a conference of justices in the evening, and was found lifeless in bed the next morning, having passed peacefully away. To his place was promoted Peter V. Daniel, another Virginian and a district judge, and just at the twelfth hour the appointment was confirmed. This was the last and almost the only important choice outside his cabinet that Van Buren made during his whole four years; for Jackson had taken the oyster of patronage, as well as of authority, and left him the shells. Nor were his cabinet changes such as to strengthen him. In the Navy Department Dickerson gave place to Paulding, of New York, the

Feb. 24, 25.

1838–40.

* See 15 Peters's Reports, 518; 10 Adams's Diary, 358, 435.

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author, a choice compliment to literature, but not to the politicians, and they grumbled at it; John M. Niles, of Connecticut, succeeded Kendall as Postmaster-General; while Butler, the Attorney-General, had two successors in brief turn, Felix Grundy and Henry D. Gilpin, the latter from Pennsylvania.* Kendall and the veteran Grundy withdrew in time to put their whole energies into the Presidential canvass; it was Grundy's last battle; Kendall survived him many years, but renounced public life forever.

Van Buren bore his crushing defeat with the calm stoicism which argued his fortitude, trusting still that "the sober second thought of the people"† would sustain and restore him to power. His final message to Congress was in some sense an apology and vindication of his official acts. It was an able document, abounding in sound observations. Two days was Congress without a quorum before this message could be received, for a great snow-storm had blocked the roads and impeded travel. When read, however, it received scant notice, and no chorus took up its strain of self-praise; the little magician, now that his wand was broken, was a magician no longer. 1840. Dec. 7–9.

In this, the most positive and courageous state paper he ever wrote, the President discussed the business situation, and pronounced himself the foe of national debt and a national bank. And, as if to make amends to the North for what he had seemed to yield on the slavery question, readjusting his record, as it were, as the Dutch burgher used to readjust his iron weathercock, he made a strong and even stirring appeal to suppress forever the African slave-trade.

The subject of State debts was already a serious one, and in alluding to it Van Buren may have purposely cast out a line to his native State, where the Whig rule under

* James Buchanan was offered Grundy's vacant place, but declined. 1 Curtis's Buchanan, 452.

† A favorite phrase of Van Buren's, but not original with him. Shepard's Van Buren, 391.

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Seward tended to increase the burdens upon the plea of developing the canal and railway systems which made New York so prosperous. Of all State debts at this time, Pennsylvania's was the largest; while Mississippi, in point of credit, had the worst repute in the Union. Both these States, and others, too, were threatened by the cloud of repudiation. American State securities were largely held in these days by foreign investors, which bred foreign pretexts for planning and meddling in American affairs. "Already," said Van Buren, "have the resources of many of the States and the future industry of their citizens been indefinitely mortgaged to the subjects of European governments, to the amount of twelve million dollars annually, to pay the constantly accruing interest of borrowed money,—a sum exceeding half of the ordinary revenues of the whole United States." And with this great increase of State taxation, needful to meet such interest, and the accumulating tendency of all public debts where selfish speculators gain the ear of government, all the more, as he added, should the Union refrain from doubling the annual burdens. On these grounds he commended the policy his administration had pursued (it was that also of his predecessors) of extinguishing the national debt as rapidly as possible and resisting every temptation to create a new one.*

1840.

There was some special pleading in this assumption that the victorious new party when in power would pile up debt more heedlessly than hitherto. But this loco-foco hostility to all banks and all capital, which had a touch of demagogism about it, had set Whigs bending the other way. What were these State debts? exclaimed Biddle, the friend of our "gigantic utilities;" how little in comparison with what England or France endured! And Webster, who had felt indignant, when lately abroad, at the arrogant tone of the English press concerning American States and American credit, thanked the gentleman for his manly defence.* But Biddle's fire, we may here add, was paling

* President's Message, December, 1840; Exec. Docs.

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fast, and he dropped from the starry firmament where he had once shone as the brightest planet; late enough, fortunately, not to endanger the Whig triumph, which owed him something, and in time to forestall their policy. In February, 1841, the Philadelphia Bank of the United States suspended for the third and last time after a brief run of twenty days, while its doors were open, which drained it of nearly $6,000,000 of specie. Great consternation followed, and the public clamored for an investigation. The worst that scandal's tongue had uttered was verified when the books and spurious assets of the monster corporation were brought to the light. The bank's vaults had been plundered by its own officers; in place of riches was a putrid mass of worthless corruption; jobbery, favoritism in agencies, and mismanagement had run riot, and the entire capital stock vanished in smoke. Philadelphia hung its head at this disgrace, and the financial sceptre now passed permanently from that city to New York. Biddle, though resigning quietly two years earlier, had so boomed this institution and the failing schemes which it was trying to bolster up, like some genius of unlimited opulence, that the chief resentment over these shameful disclosures turned upon him. Arraigned for conspiracy to plunder the stockholders, he escaped on a technical plea. The silken mask which must have stifled many a heartfelt moan he never quite cast aside; but his pride could not bear long the wreck of a blasted fame. Biddle died insolvent and broken-hearted, neither the first nor the last American financier of brilliant mind and generous spirit, even in that demure city, whose dazzling operations united him with the government and then drew him beyond his depth.†

1841. Feb. 4.

April.

1844.

This final catastrophe must have smoothed out Jackson's grim visage in this hour of defeat. For Van Buren, too, it was something of a triumph; for a toast of his,

* 58 Niles, 415.

† See 60 Niles; local newspapers; Sumner's Jackson.

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which had become national, drank "uncompromising hostility to the United States Bank, the honor and interest of the country requiring it." But whether the downward career of this great institution was not impelled more by Jackson's ferocity and the misfortunes it could not escape than an innate proclivity to vice will not likely be known till the books are opened at the last judgment; and the facts we have recorded may serve, meanwhile, the epitaph.

For this short and unfruitful session of Congress, and the remnant of his official term, it mattered little what the outgoing President might think or say. The financial operations of government went on nearly as before, and there was no time to put into operation the new sub-treasury plan, now plainly doomed. Congress did little or nothing beyond the barest routine of voting the public supplies. Late in the winter the President-elect, General Harrison, after a triumphal progress from Ohio, reached the capital, swarms of office-seekers after him; and the whole interest as to men or measures centred at once in his eastern horizon. Van Buren must have felt at this moment the hollowness of his friendship with the slaveholders: it was Wise who stigmatized him in debate as "a northern man with southern feelings," and this taunt, fastened on his name by Adams, has adhered ever since. Van Buren kept silent, but he remembered; the reproach was harder than he deserved. Some States, however, sent in testimonials, among them Missouri, whom he complimented in response as a model State. He was tendered public banquets, but declined them; and leaving Washington in about a week after Harrison's inauguration, he went decorously home with but brief public entertainment, carrying into a retirement, which he did not yet think permanent, the same bland and courteous expressions which he had always used. For Johnson, the amiable and much overrated Vice-President, whose national hopes were more surely blasted, a door stood open into the Kentucky legislature,

1840-41.

1841. February.

1841.

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through whose portal Tecumseh's slayer vanishes from sight.*

Van Buren's personal character and administration may be summed up briefly. He was the first of American Presidents during nearly half a century whose lineage was Dutch instead of British; the first, moreover, who was not born a British subject, but on free American soil. But what was of more immediate consequence, Van Buren was the typical New Yorker of public life and the first President of this Union from that great middle section where politics have responded most to practical management. A poor farmer's boy, self-educated and aspiring, with an ancestry long rooted in a plodding and phlegmatic town given to gardening, this bright Kinderhook lawyer was initiated when young in the methods of the Democratic machine by Aaron Burr himself, and rose by his clever handling of it through all the grades from county politician to governor; lifted from pinnacle to pinnacle in his national ascent by the ingenious mechanism he had so carefully perfected which kept his great State moving to his will. He it was whose example, if not his hand, made the spoils system a national one; and hence the title given by his personal admirers, which published his renown in the practice of the black art, in political sleight of hand. For the man who could cast the vote of New York was not to be kept out of any national arrangement. And this, with Jackson's fiat, was what brought the little magician into the Presidency only to hurl him down again. The terrible crisis of 1837 proved that Van Buren had no hold whatever upon the general confidence; that he had been valued for his machine, for his dexterity. He had some strong life-long friendships, chiefly among those he had promoted in his State to be his captains;† but as the

* See 60 Niles; newspapers of the day; Shepard's Van Buren.

† Something has been urged on the score of his long friendship with so remarkable a man as Jackson. But Jackson's later friendships went much by policy, and appreciated devoted service more than equal intercourse. Did Van Buren ever take the peril of opposing Jackson's

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friend of everybody his easy deportment was valued at its true worth. His sorcery had, in reality, combined interests and not hearts, and his spell was gone when his gift enterprise became bankrupt. There is a Nemesis in politics, as in the private affairs of life, and Van Buren experienced it.

Far be it from us, however, to deny to Van Buren the possession of some excellent endowments for a chief magistrate. It seemed as if he felt in these four years, for the first time, a laudable independence, a determination to show that he was more than the clever courtier, the man of the world that he was taken for. He made heroic efforts to be a historical President. But his antecedents were too much for him: in the first place, his repute for cunning artifice; next, his relation with Jackson. For Jackson's errors he suffered by a sort of retributive justice; he had gained the inheritance by pandering to Jackson's glory, and Jackson, after squandering the glory, devised the inheritance mortgaged for debt. In points of discretion and ability any statesman is liable to be misjudged by his age, but seldom in the reputation of sly dealing and duplicity. Forsyth summed up the case for Van Buren's admirers in 1832 when he lauded his unexampled success; for such success made men aware that he was a dangerous enemy. When in high station Van Buren tried to dispel the impression that he was a man of intrigue; but the more he tried, the more of an intriguer he was thought to be. Though subtle rather than strong, he certainly had talents far beyond the average of public men, not as a political organizer only, but in the higher range of statesmanship. He was a good diplomatist, a fair administrator; his democracy, albeit a little servile to the many, was wholesome and robust. He steered between North and South on irritating subjects better than he received credit for doing. As

purposes? Jackson no doubt found him a foil in his outer relations, and in some sense a preceptor; but Jackson's perception was too keen not to pierce through the gauze of benevolent simplicity which his favorite sometimes affected. He enjoyed the contrast between himself and the man of imperturbable temper and cautious diplomacy.

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President, Van Buren was still detestable, in the use of the public patronage, and showed corrupt tendencies; but he should be credited with moral courage and sagacity in the leading measure by which his administration is distinguished. The sub-treasury plan, the final divorce of public and private finances, was his own; he brought his party to that policy and shared a national defeat rather than surrender it. This is enough to stamp him as a statesman.

Van Buren in personal appearance was below the middle height and inclined to corpulence. The familiar names "Matty" and "Little Van" were not ill bestowed upon him, whether in ridicule or admiration. His blue eye was quick and searching; his hair, turned to gray, stood crisply out on both sides of his broad forehead; and, with his bald head and handsome countenance, he had a decidedly English look, as of one prosperous, benevolent, shrewd, an alert looker upon the busy world about him, satisfied with himself, but withal somewhat cynical of men and their motives.* Had he been given more to field sports and fox-hunting, one might think of him as an American Lord Palmerston, such was his air of bright and breezy good humor and his princely affectation. He valued the philosophic temper of Franklin and Madison, and made much commodity of his little thoughtful civilities. To Madison he has sometimes been likened for calmness, discretion, gentle manners, and the remarkable facility of avoiding personal quarrels. That parallel might be drawn out further; for Madison and Van Buren each succeeded a remarkable political leader, whose personal friendship advanced him; each had held the portfolio of State; each suffered, too, by the inevitable contrast with a predecessor who was taller in every sense; each was overtaken by the blinding storm which was stirred before his coming; and while neither retired from the Presidential office with the fame he had hoped for, both lived long enough to take a

* See portraits in Corcoran Gallery, Washington; City Hall, New York, etc.; also Shepard's Van Buren, 383.

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calm retrospect, and see in troublesome times that the people were better instead of worse for the policy each had pursued. But here the parallel must end. Madison was as far above the suspicion of hypocrisy or servility as Van Buren was made opprobrious by it. His mild and unobtrusive consideration for others was of a very different flavor from Van Buren's imperturbable vivacity, which showed the desire to half conceal, or his cautious expression of views, feeling the way with subtle reservations. Van Buren was bolder, as well as more selfish, in the conduct of affairs. Madison, indeed, was rather a timid Executive, having been little trained to take responsibility; but for patriotic purpose he was more trustworthy and more trusted; and, in fact, having been re-elected to office, he carried the country through the crisis for which men had reproached his party, and retired victorious. But for Van Buren, victory, even such as his policy was capable of winning, had to be postponed; for, to begin with, the people mistrusted his sincerity and feared that his subtreasury was the blind for some deeper scheme. The name of dem[illegible]ong adhered to him, though time brought a better appreciation of his genuine merit.

Science and literature had advanced these last ten years, and, in fact, during Van Buren's brief term of office. To the passion for exploring the hidden regions of the globe strong stimulus was given by the Arctic discoveries of British voyagers, Parry, Ross, and Franklin, whose imagined northwest passage and open polar sea have long lost all practical interest without ceasing to lure on bold mariners to the siren of the iceberg. To Antarctic search, their counterpart, American rivalry was first directed. The United States exploring expedition, which sailed from Norfolk in 1838, under command of Lieutenant Wilkes, of the navy, and was absent nearly four years, gave this republic some renown in the fascinating field of polar adventure. Nearly ninety thousand miles were sailed, many islands visited in the Pacific Archipelago which navigators had shunned ever since

1830-40.

1838-42.

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Captain Cook's tragic death, many seas ploughed whose smooth and transparent waters were reddened with the coral reef; and, besides, was skirted the icy barrier of the lone Antarctic continent, which Wilkes and his command saw for the first time stretching in the white distance its unmeasured leagues of impenetrable shore.* We were not without benefactions from strangers to our institutions. For "the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men" this government received a private fund amounting to $515,000, under the will of an Englishman, James Smithson, for founding at Washington an institution to be known by his name. Congress had yet matured no plan for employing the endowment, but John Quincy Adams, Richard Rush, and others of our most accomplished statesmen gave the ideas which were at length embodied in a plan more strictly scientific, perhaps, than the legacy defined.† Adams's first wish was to sweep the sky with telescopes, but the national funds supplied for this an observatory; Rush, by whose legal assistance the Smithson fund was procured in the English chancery, would have added a lectureship devoted to Government and public law, and this idea still awaits a benefactor whose fittest domicile would be American. In 1838 the "Sirius" and "Great Western" proved to a demonstration that steam voyages across the Atlantic were perfectly feasible; and two hemispheres were astonished when the latter vessel brought its sixty passengers safely from Bristol to New York in fourteen and a half days.‡ The next great civilizer of this age after the steam locomotive, was still unrevealed; but Morse, while perfecting in Paris his priceless invention, the magnetic telegraph, hailed Daguerre's new discovery of sun pictures,§ whose process was exhibited the next year in our Atlantic cities; many who saw these faint pictures on the polished plate owning that a new revolution had begun in

1838.

1838.

1839.

* President's Message, December, 1840; 64 Niles, 190, etc.

† See Act August 10, 1846.

‡ 1 Seward's Biography, 364.

§ 56 Niles, 134.

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art, while others, incredulous, asserted that if the sunbeam painted them at all they would prove as transient as the painter. Stirred by such novelties, and by the superficial instruction of scientific lectures in the lyceum, the untrained mind inclined to spectral illusions; the sea-serpent was seen off Nahant rocks and at scores of other places, never near enough to catch or be caught; and an ingenious story fabricated for the press, of marvellous vales, crystal lakes, and majestic temples, descried in the moon through Herschel's new telescope, was so widely believed that Herschel himself had to expose the hoax.

1837-40.

In American literature there had been through this decade a positive development, and new names were soaring into distinction besides those we have named of earlier renown.* Longfellow, when he took a professor's chair at Harvard, was a bard already renowned by those earlier songs of life which will be longest remembered; the first American consecrated to verse was this poet of the multitude, who fitted new strings to his lyre while he studied and saw, and whose verse reached the human heart through every diversity of expression. Whittier, of simple habits and less favored by fortune, looked to a more distant sunlight, an anti-slavery editor training himself for the anti-slavery bard. Bancroft, the father of American history, crowned with those consummate gifts for a historian, long life and the power of continuance, varied his lengthening task by the cares of office; he had produced two volumes of his work, and under Van Buren he was the collector at Boston's port. Prescott, that gentle patrician, whose literary life was a constant struggle with the infirmity of blindness and the temptations of competence, put forth with signal success the maiden fruit of his pen. Philology found fame in Webster, whose dictionary became the standard of the mother-tongue, disputed only by that other of our philologists, Worcester. Of Emerson we have spoken, the pole-star of a new philosophy of common life.† Other respectable

1830-40.

1836.

* Vol. iii, p. 528.

† *Supra*, p. 814.

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names in our literature belong to this decade. Sparks, a gatherer of historical materials; Bowditch, the self-taught mathematician; Barnes, Norton, Lyman Beecher, among theologians; Wheaton, Kent, and Story, lights in jurisprudence; Carey, Lieber, and Wayland, our accepted guides in mental philosophy and political economy, as were Sullivan, Audubon, Gray, and others in natural history and science; Kennedy, Ware, the misanthropic Poe, Miss Sedgwick, Dana, Willis, with his light but graphic sketches of fashion, and a host of minor celebrities in poetry and fiction, better adapted to those times than our own. Young Oliver Wendell Holmes, who had just quaffed for the first time the nectar of life, tickled Harvard's classic circle by his Phi Beta Kappa poem which was full of sparkle; but Motley, of the same circle, failed as a novelist of New England life, and like the shy and subtle Hawthorne, his successor in that field, whose early pearls of thought were hidden under the bright morocco of trashy annuals, had a longer path to tread to appreciation. It is not so much the brilliancy as the breadth of native authorship which here confronts us; with far less of training facilities or library treasures at command than contemporaries abroad, we find America beginning to dispute already the palm of scholarship in the mother-tongue. Our three greatest literati of these earlier years, Irving, Cooper, and Bryant, all harnessed imagination to historical study. The practical bent of the American mind and its flexible fibre adapted it well to the purpose of giving instruction; text-books were issued on a variety of subjects, and popular works on geography, grammar, history, and other studies aided greatly the efforts of Mann, Barnard, and other reformers to advance the standard of common-school education. In geography our common people showed great interest; far less in history, save as it decked itself, like fiction or biography, for light reading; and the farther we sailed from the eighteenth century the less we heeded those beacons of Greece and Rome and the other ancient republics to which our earlier statesmen were always pointing. For in all dangers the

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tendency of the age was now to disregard precedent and surmount the crisis by our own ingenuity.

This, too, is the decade when a cheap American press was established, and journalistic independence and enterprise grew in the dissemination of news, reaping rewards in wealth and influence such as our third estate had not dreamed of. The party press no longer relied, as of old, upon the statesman whose free contribution, under the guise of Cato or Phocian, had decked out the meagre column; but the responsible editor wrote leading articles and commented upon the news gathered by his reporters. Yet how many of these presses depended on the favors of great men, and rose or fell with the caprices of politics! Blair, Webb, Weed, Ritchie, Kendall, Houghton, Seaton, men like these were powerful behind the throne, but the throne itself was transitory. Few such editors could reap a steady fortune; most of them would any time have thrown up his newspaper for the four years' hold of a collectorship, a foreign mission, or any other office with a round salary. But now an era was dawning when the ownership of a well-located and well-conducted press might yield a splendid income, and an influence, too, in affairs for which public life and its precarious honors could offer no equivalent; when statesmen the first would court and not patronize its conductors. New York city presented the richest field for such pioneer effort. Here, in 1833, was started the *Sun*, the first really successful penny paper in the world, creating a new patronage in the vast society which had hitherto refrained from newspapers as a luxury; it sold for one cent, and its originator, Hoe, soon introduced steam-power in place of the crank, and still later invented that lightning cylinder-press without which the enormous daily circulation, already running past the hundred thousand, could not possibly have been met. The New York *Herald*, better edited, made presently an impression in journalism still more remarkable. Its founder was James Gordon Bennett, a pungent and attractive though cynical writer, whose tact, perseverance, energy, and long experience of

1830-40.

1833.

1835.

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city life and newspaper work gave him an immense advantage in this kind of enterprise. With only five hundred dollars in money, Bennett, in the prime of life, began issuing from a dingy cellar in Wall street a daily paper which at his death a dukedom could not have purchased. His teeming brain was the real capital of the enterprise, and the secret of his rapid success was that he sought out every daily fact which could interest, and arranged his materials, down to the advertisements, so that his paper should be readable from first column to last. For the first time was presented a lively and picturesque scene of American every-day life; for the *Herald* sought news in every direction, pried into the assemblies and the police court, set the first example of accurate Wall street news and financial articles, and in place of those phantom suggestions of anniversary meetings, which above all things had respected decorum, furnished full reports, taken down upon the spot, which heeded propriety very little, so long as they were accurate and racy. Another example of thriftiness was set by permitting no book debts to accumulate, but dealing strictly for cash,—a system which brought the newsboy into active demand at the street corner. Heart-sick journalists had been stung constantly by the subscriber who ordered his paper stopped; but this was less than the agony of supplying patrons who silently defaulted what they owed. In its better business habits and the energetic diffusion of news more generously collected and brought within reach of a wider circle of readers, the *Herald* fulfilled an honorable mission. Never had the power of the party organ been more abused than under Blair and Kendall, as Bennett knew to his own cost; public opinion was manufactured by able persons in Washington, who sent their political comments to remote corners of the Union, had them published, and then collected these extracts in the administration organ as the latest public testimony.* But the *Herald* by no means realized the ideal of independent journalism in its best sense, which is

* Harriet Martineau's Travels.

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to give all sides the fairest hearing and then apply the touchstone of a conscientious comparison; for the public must act in a free country, and of all engines to impel the right action none can be compared to a fearless and uncorrupt press, devoted to the public's welfare. But Bennett, whose press reflected himself, was a sort of misanthrope, morose and skeptical, and his supreme effort seemed to be to make a fetish of his paper and set all to buying it, and then laughing with him at the bagatelle of life. This satanic quality was not in Horace Greeley, who had been crushed more than once in trying to conduct a press upon credit. Greeley's personality was unique, like Bennett's, but he was no libeller. Greeley held to a higher ideal while emulating the *Herald's* enterprise; yet the *Tribune* was purely a party paper, the first cheap journal, in fact, of the
1841. Whig cause, started after Harrison came in, with a leaning to novelties and an amiable idiosyncrasy; it was a live paper and fought its way.* Both the *Herald* and *Tribune*, like other newspapers which followed them, began at one cent, but doubled the price as they increased in circulation through readers and advertisers, and became self-supporting. Newspapers, these among them, were for many years longer identified with their conductors; it was
1846. far into the new decade that the idea of joint association in journalism was applied in Greeley's newspaper, which as long as he lived personified really the founder. The penny press of our largest cities, which made readers by the tens of thousands where there were thousands before, increased unquestionably in these United States of America the influence of that most powerful establishment of modern times, which guides men by impelling thought and not by the force of action. A mean journal that must be which panders to the crowd for the smallest coin, if it reflects the image of the times for idle or vicious exhibition and cannot draw men higher.

* *Supra*, p. 338. See Hudson's Journalism; Parton's Greeley and Bennett.

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CHAPTER XVI.

ADMINISTRATION OF WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1841—APRIL 4, 1841.

HARRISON'S too brief administration may be passed rapidly by with inverted torch. The kindly old man with the dark, flashing eye and the intelligent face, every line of which showed sincerity and good-will, came with a splendid ovation to the scene of official dignity. It was his sixty-eighth birthday when he arrived at Washington after a hard week's journey in the midst of inclement weather, which had not hindered the spontaneous demonstration on the way. He came unattended by household, and hence gained little rest or seclusion. He braved exposures carelessly for his age, as though to falsify all tales of shattered strength and intellect. He lived almost literally in a crowd from morning to night, eagerly courted and caressed, accessible to everybody, and brimming over with gratitude at the signal confidence which his country had expressed for him. Men of many minds were soliciting, advising, counteracting one another's movements; he felt his obligation to all; and the "latch-string out," which had given the key-note to his canvass, forbade him to appear grudging of his time or hospitality. 1841. Feb. 9.

All this was unfavorable to a man of his declining years and strength, especially after the long and exciting campaign he had just passed through. The more he was showing his vigor, the more he was losing it. Nor were his Whig managers, in their exultation, prudent with their good fortune. On the day of Harrison's inauguration a parade was arranged of quite an unusual March 4.

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sort with the second-hand regalia of Tippecanoe clubs, emblematic wagons, and citizens mingling in the military escort; for the crowd of visitors was very great. Thus surrounded, Harrison rode on a white charger, and the march was kept up for two hours from east to west, and from west and east again. Every pageant at the national capital in this era had something of the shabby-genteel and pretentious about it. This "Cincinnatus, called from the plough," brought Plutarch and Rollin to bear upon the inaugural address which he delivered on the east capitol steps.* Three references in this address, too, did Harrison make to the teachings of Jefferson as one of his disciples. Though didactic in style, he made plain some leading principles by which he meant to be guided in his official station: to use the veto power sparingly, and not make himself part of the legislature; to check federal interference with our free elections in the misuse of patronage and the public offices; to separate the purse from the sword, to respect the rights of subordinates, and shape out his policy so as to bring, as he termed it, "the greatest good to the greatest number," a maxim which profounder statesmanship would wish converted to "the greatest good of the whole." He took pains to intimate that he was not disposed in the slavery question to trespass upon southern rights, but to cultivate concord. What was most pertinent to the times, he repelled the idea that a nation's currency should be exclusively of metal; and this was taken to mean that he wished a new National Bank. An honest purpose to do right shone out from this oration like a parting ray; it was the last statement of policy Harrison ever addressed to the people whose confidence had installed him. Taking the oath just before pronouncing his final paragraph, he remounted his horse and proceeded to the official mansion, escorted as before. His speech had lasted an hour; his exposure was long to the keen blast

* "Twelve Roman proconsuls and several citizens have I slain," said Webster, after revising the draft of his address, "and yet they are not all dead."

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without cloak or overcoat; and the day was dark, chilly, and threatening.*

The cabinet list of the new President was carefully made up. It comprised Daniel Webster, as Secretary of State; Thomas Ewing, Secretary of the Treasury; John Bell, Secretary of War; George E. Badger, Secretary of the Navy; Francis E. Granger, Postmaster-General; and John J. Crittenden, Attorney-General. These appointments had been announced informally before the middle of February; and now the Senate promptly confirmed them in executive session, all of the nominees but Badger, of North Carolina, being already prominent in public life. Granger was the only one of them who failed of courtesy from the opposition. Clay's omission from this list was of his own choice. Soon after the election Harrison had visited him in his home and offered him the first place; but Clay, declining all cabinet honors for himself, named Ewing and Crittenden as his friends. Harrison then wrote at once to Webster, offering him the choice between the State Department and the Treasury, and Webster chose the former.† It was significant, then, that two rival factions, led by the two great senators, were here represented; but the Clay interest greatly predominated; indeed, Webster's only support came from Granger, the anti-Mason with anti-slavery proclivities, who seemed to be coupled rather loosely with the party in power.‡ Clay's ambition already felt the jostle of Webster, though confident of his own advantage with the great mass of the Whigs. Harrison, grateful to both for suppressing all pique and generously aiding his canvass, desired to attach more strongly to him men whose talents and public claims he knew were more conspicuous

1841.

March 5.

December.

* See National Intelligencer, 2 N. Sargent's Reminiscences, Globe, etc.; 10 J. Q. Adams's Diary; 2 Benton's View.

† Clay's Priv. Corr., 446; 2 Curtis's Webster, 51.

‡ Bell appears to have been a sort of popular selection; he was not the hearty choice of either Clay or Webster for the cabinet. 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 136.

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than his own by giving each to feel that the way was open after he had made the entrance; and hence his pledges, which he volunteered when first nominated and reiterated in his inaugural address and on all possible occasions with the utmost fervor, that he would never consent to serve a second term,—a pledge which no candidate for President should give without meaning it, but which most candidates ought never to give at all, but leave the public welfare to determine. But while delicate on this point towards Clay, Harrison respected his own dignity, and meant that it should not be justly said that Clay's arrogance ruled his policy.*

It will usually be found in American politics that the most eloquent denunciation of the spoils system in distributing public offices comes from the men and the party out of power. An ounce of real forbearance by the administration which has the patronage in its hands is worth a hundred sermons on this head by way of wholesome example. And now the high-toned Whigs are seen, the moment they gain possession of the citadel, entering upon the same scramble for the offices, little and great, the same ruthless decapitation by the party axe, the same proscription for opinion's sake, which for twelve years they had been discussing as the crime of the Jackson Democracy, and under the same specious pretence of reform as theirs. Jackson, it was true, had set the first example of party monopoly; but it took this second to establish the practice as a national one. The lust of office once aroused, it can never be put down until public opinion compels a truce of

* On this point see 2 Sargent, 116; Clay's Corr., 451, 452, where Harrison shows himself sensitive to appearances and resents some indiscreet pressure on Clay's part. Clay, in December, 1840 (see ib., 446), grudgingly admitted that Webster ought to be invited into the cabinet. He did not wish him in the Treasury; but the President-elect, following his own bent, gave Webster a generous invitation, with the option stated in the text. Neither Webster nor Clay, if the truth must be told, thought highly of Harrison's ability. Webster drew up an inaugural address for Harrison to recite, but Harrison preferred his own composition. Wm. Schouler's Recollections in Boston Journal, 1870.

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parties. Washington swarmed with Whig office-seekers, of another stripe than those of 1829, but not less persevering; they were brought by boat and rail, more easily and more numerously than before. The departments were thronged with them at office hours. Secretaries were buttonholed at home, on the street-corners, wherever they could be found; but at the White House these claimants of reward literally took possession. The new President was besieged day and night, some sleeping, it is said, in the halls and corridors so as to waylay him first in the morning; for all these anxious ones were emboldened by his easy disregard of routine hours. Harrison had a soft heart for such men, for he remembered when he had to solicit place himself on the score of his need, as well as his service.* Soon as the Senate adjourned the party guillotine was set in operation. The Senate itself had already set an example by turning out Blair and Rives as printers of that body. Democrat officials met their fate like Indian braves, accepting the fortune of war. Never before was there such a rush for office, because there had never been so many offices to struggle for. Every Whig Congressman of influence was importuned for a letter or a good word; old stagers of Monroe's day pestered Adams, though to little purpose; while Clay, whose very abstinence for himself magnified him into the chief almoner of the Whig benevolence, wrote testily that he could not attend to all the applications that came to him if the day had forty-eight hours.† March.

Meantime, the new President was dispensing the patronage under an embarrassment of riches in so many able counsellors of antagonizing ambition, and such a host of aspirants, all eager to light their torches in his popularity. Slowly, but with good judgment, he pursued his task, his simple, old-fashioned honesty radiating the selfish struggle of ambitious interests about him. But the pressure

* See Monroe's MSS., June, 1823, Harrison's application for the Mexican mission.

† Clay's Priv. Corr., 451; 10 Adams's Diary.

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bore heavily upon him. Some of the new appointments disclosed the strong rivalry of the Clay and Webster factions; the New York collectorship, for instance, over which Clay grew so violent that the President pulled up the reins and bluntly charged him with dictation.* March passed half away before the administration could settle upon its system; at length, however, on the 17th of the month, the President convened an extra session by proclamation for the 31st of May. This call recited the revenue and finances as the principal cause for issuing it. State-rights Whigs rightly regarded the step as meaning that their peculiar tenets were not in favor, and that the sub-treasury was to be set aside for some sort of national bank.†

March 17.

Here, as the web began to weave, the wheel was broken. Harrison, never robust of body, had been borne into the vale of years by temperance and the routine of mild activity. He had not the defiant mettle, the indomitable energy, the pride of will, of that other old soldier, to whose spoils policy he fell the first victim. The incessant strain of public care, consequent upon a campaign of unparalleled excitement and the fatigues of his triumphant journey, agitated and wore him down faster than they could conceive who drained his vitality so freely. Generous and hospitable, he indulged his friends to his own destruction. His wife had not yet joined him, and the White House life was homeless. Busy from sunrise until nearly midnight with company and affairs, except for an hour each day which he passed with his cabinet, he had neither privacy nor leisure. His first purchase as chief ruler was a Bible and prayer-book; and after his daily devotions he would take a morning walk, often bringing back some old

* Clay's Priv. Corr., 452. Clay, much mortified at this, denied that he had dictated in official appointments, but seemed to admit the charge as to points of public policy.

† 2 Tyler's Tyler, 15. Whigs, or those at least in Congress under Clay's influence, had agreed upon the necessity of calling an extra session before Harrison reached the capital. 1 J. J. Crittenden, 141.

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friend to breakfast with him. Careless exposure one morning brought on a chill which ran into pneumonia and a profuse diarrhœa; his feeble frame succumbed, and he died calmly on the 4th of April, one month from the date of his inauguration. In his last incoherent utterance he seemed to be enjoining upon another the trust which slipped from his ghostly grasp: "Sir, I wish you to understand the true principles of the government; I wish them carried out; I ask nothing more."* April 4.

This was the first time that death had invaded the White House or smote the chief of the people, and so sudden was the shock that the nation seemed stunned by this calamity. Harrison was loved by all the people, and even party opponents acknowledged his benevolence and high purpose. The tokens of national sorrow and respect were universal. At the capital the obsequies of the dead President, hastily arranged, were as splendid as so quiet a season would permit in that pilgrim city; and pageants followed in more populous places to pay imaginary honors. April 7.

The 7th of April was the day of the funeral. The north portico of the mansion was hung with unaccustomed black. They who had hustled in its halls with headlong zeal a few days before trod gently and spoke in whispers. The body, in its leaden casket, was taken from the East Room where it had lain in state on a bier heaped with flowers; it was placed in an open funeral car, which stood at the north portico, covered with black velvet and drawn by six white horses, each with its colored groom. A wailing of trumpets arose, inexpressibly mournful, and a beating of muffled drums, as the military escort began its march down the avenue with arms reversed. The sky was overcast, and only a stray sunbeam from the clouds would shine upon the sable car with its nodding plumes as the procession moved eastward in slow array, minute-guns firing. Rounding the deserted capitol, whose eastern steps, where Harrison so lately stood, led upward, as a mourner might fancy, like Jacob's ladder, it approached and entered the

* 60 Niles, 83; cabinet statement, April 4.

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Congressional burying-ground. Here the present obsequies ended. The last expression of Harrison's waxen face was gentle and serene.*

Harrison died honorably poor, as became his career. Congress, when it met, made an appropriation for his funeral expenses, and voted a year's salary to his widow.

June. July. Here and in many States the legislatures testified respect for his memory.† At the request of Cincinnati friends, the late President's remains were removed in the summer to his family home; and at North Bend, near the Ohio's bank, the good gray head was laid quietly to rest.

"Heaven," says Wise, of Virginia, alluding, long years after, to Harrison's death, "saved him from the fate of Actæon; for, had he lived until Congress met, he would have been devoured by the divided pack of his own dogs."‡ The figure is a striking one, but not appropriate. The new President had his leash well in hand; they of the pack that hunted were scenting the game; the few that barked could not have harmed him.§ Harrison was strong without Virginia, his native State, and his rock of strength was the solid confidence of the Union. The people's candidate in the critical times at hand would have proved himself, had he lived, the people's friend. It must not be forgotten that he was trained a civilian not less than a soldier; a party man, though a moderate one, and by no means incompetent to his task, which was to conciliate confidence. The country has had abler men than Harrison, but few whose death, coming when it did, was in so real a sense a public calamity.

* National Intelligencer and other newspapers of the day.

† U. S. Statutes, 1841.

‡ Wise's Decades, 180.

§ Wise himself, who barked loudest, one might add, was likely to have been muzzled by the mission he was after; and would that it had been so. See 10 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 445.

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CHAPTER XVII.

ADMINISTRATION OF JOHN TYLER.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS.

APRIL 4, 1841—MARCH 3, 1843.

JOHN TYLER was at his home in Virginia when President Harrison died. A despatch was at once sent to him by the cabinet, all of whom, excepting the Secretary of the Navy, were then at the capital; these joined in the official bulletin which announced to the country its sudden bereavement. The messenger sped fast to Williamsburg, and Tyler with equal speed repaired on the summons to Washington, where he arrived at day-break on the 6th, having performed the journey in twenty-one hours. On the same day the heads of the departments waited upon him, and he requested them all to retain their places. The chosen Vice-President then took the oath of office as President of the United States before Chief-Justice Cranch of the district federal court. The next day he attended the funeral of his predecessor, and on the 14th was installed at the White House.*

1841. April 4–5. April 6. April 7. April 14.

By way of inaugural message and an official announcement of principles, the new President had in the mean time published an address to the people of the United States three days after assuming his promoted functions. It had the fervid expression usual with him; and, if words meant anything, pledged him to continue in the line of policy which the lamented Harrison had chosen. It proclaimed him a Whig in the fullest party sense. Its

April 9.

* 2 Tyler's Tyler, 11; 60 Niles, and other newspapers of the day; 2 Statesman's Manual.

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very platitudes, as in condemning the union of "the sword and the purse," were a rebuke to the Jackson dynasty. All human institutions, was Tyler's language, tended to final downfall by the concentration of power in one man: proscriptive removals from office and the partisan service of officials he was equally opposed to; he wished to abolish sinecures, instituting a rigid economy in expenditures, and holding all public agents to a strict public responsibility. As to foreign nations, this address took the usual ground: justice to all, while submitting to injustice from no one. But the main concern was to know where the new President stood on practical finance, on banks, deposits, and the currency; and here, to the gratification of the great majority of those to whom he owed his election, Tyler seemed even zealous and eager to commit himself. "If any war," he said, "has existed between the government and the currency it shall cease;" and he added that he would promptly sanction any constitutional measure which, originating in Congress, should have for its object the restoration of a sound circulating medium; promising, finally, to resort "to the fathers of the great Republican school" for advice and instruction.* This address was followed soon by a proclamation recommending the observance of May 14 as a day of general fast to commemorate the nation's affliction. The call of the late President for an extra session of Congress was allowed an unhindered effect.†

April 13.

Thus far, at least, Tyler's administration had that soothing conformity to the situation which best befits the magistrate under our system whom Providence promotes beyond the point where his fellow-citizens meant by their suffrage to place him. The heir-apparent of blood royal may come some day to the throne, and royal title itself turns by premeditation upon the accidents of human life; but no Vice-President of the United States ever was or ever will be voted for in a genuine expectation that he will be more than a Vice-President while the four years

* 2 Statesman's Manual. † Ib.; 60 Niles.

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last. Be his constitutional rights, then, as they may, he has not that popular prestige and support which qualifies him to strike out boldly and centre the policy in himself; he is but the trustee of a broken administration to hold its fragments together. Sad, almost invariably, has been our experience over this promoted official, for the very reason that some minority element is apt to be placated by his selection, and the temptation of opportunity proves too great for him; his personal tastes and junior surroundings become the criterion to the public detriment. Under the earlier scheme of the American constitution, President and Vice-President were the leaders of opposing parties; under the later, they are likely to stand at opposite poles of the same party, and this was the present difficulty. A safe Unionist, a moderate man of northern sentiments, the Whigs selected for President; a southern slaveholder—a Virginian and an ex-Democrat—took readily the second place. Had Clay, whose friendship was his good fortune, been nominated President, some northern man would instead have completed the ticket. For Vice-President simply, Tyler's choice was a popular one; he had served long in the national Senate, and was well qualified to preside there; his pedigree was of the best in a State of pedigrees; he was a man of amiable manners, and behaving as a man of honor when proscribed by the party to which he belonged, it was believed he would be honorable to the new party with which he became affiliated. His conduct in the campaign of 1840 strengthened the good impression of him, though he failed to carry his State to the Whigs; he had not volunteered his individual opinions, but expressed the fullest confidence in Harrison's sagacity. When sworn into office as Vice-President, his speech had breathed the same strain of happy compliment; he deemed it a high honor to sit in the seat which Gerry, Clinton, and Tompkins, and their still more illustrious predecessors, had occupied before him. It was right that he should feel contented there. He was pre-eminent in nothing but for the splendid luck that followed always his political independence. So little serious thought had been given to his

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views of party policy or patronage, or to the possible contingency of his advancement, that the Whig plans were matured without so much as keeping him at the capital after the Senate adjourned.

But now the contingency had happened, and, for the first time, Heaven's stroke had fallen on the highest incumbent of this great Republic as though he had been the humblest of the people. The supreme executive title devolved in a moment without the intervention of a voice or vote. John Tyler ruled in the place of the good Harrison. Who is John Tyler? it was asked. And what is the status of one who succeeds to the vacant place under such circumstances? For all were stunned and bewildered in this first shock of affliction. The successful Whigs could not realize at once the magnitude of their loss. But it was true that they had conquered by the uncertain sign of promising some change for the better; and they had really hung the whole framework of their principles upon the thread of a single human life and that a frail one; they had supposed, and with reason, that Harrison's judgment would accord with the common sense of the situation. It was now time to scrutinize the record of John Tyler as it had not been scrutinized before. This youngest of all Presidents ever yet seated in office, fifty-one years of age when he took up his abode at the White House, was in no sense a national man nor even a sound Whig. Taken upon his antecedents, he was of those who skirt the border-line of parties close enough to tempt either to bid for him when in a strait. By his own statement his course had been "almost that of a neutral" up to the time when he took his seat in the United States Senate, though constantly in the public service from the time of turning his majority, whether as legislator, Congressman, or governor of his native State.* Randolph's intemperance, we have seen, was Tyler's stepping-stone to the wider circle;† a squeamish Democrat, he had thought the centralism expounded in Adams's first message an insult to Virginia, and yet he scaled the ladder to the window

* 1 Tyler's Tyler, 384.

† *Supra*, vol. iii, p. 385.

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of Adams's premier like a rash lover. But he voted in the Senate as an independent Democrat; and Clay himself in 1841 spoke bitterly of their twenty years of intimate friendship, during thirteen years of which they had never voted together on a single question of principle.* In principle, to speak truly, Tyler was consistent only in being for State rights and a southern man to the core. Though gifted with tact, courtly manners, and a pleasing temper, he had within him the impetuous spirit of a slave-driver. Northern needs and northern society he did not and could not comprehend; his sympathies were not national, but to bend the nation to the ambition of his section. He was a Virginian of the later type, prouder of his State than the Union. "Do you believe," asked he, when the Missouri question was under debate, "that southern bayonets will ever be plunged in southern hearts?" In that debate he took the extreme ground, for so early a day, that Congress had no constitutional right to prohibit slavery in the territories;† and we have already seen him in 1833, when South Carolina was in revolt, casting his solitary vote in the Senate against the bill for enforcing the supremacy of the Union.‡ Jackson's heroic attitude on this latter occasion, rather than his interference with the National Bank, was what estranged Tyler from the Democratic party. Being a fluent and decidedly emotional writer and speaker, he was quite given to asseveration. His conscience, according to his own description, was exceedingly tender; but what seemed stranger still, it was sensitive to the trivialities of a dispute, while callous concerning the deeper moralities involved. It was a conscience of overburdened ingenuity, like Hogarth's machine for drawing the cork from a bottle. Thus, Tyler deplored the existence of slavery, but since it had been planted here without his fault he would tolerate no interference with it;§ he thought nullification wrong, but it was a greater wrong to coerce a nullifying State; Benton's expunging resolu-

* Tyler's Tyler, 23.
† 1 Tyler's Tyler, 320, etc.
‡ *Supra*, p. 101.
§ 1 Tyler's Tyler, 313.

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tion he utterly abhorred, not in the sense that the original censure of the President ought to stand, but because it was perjury, blasphemy, or some other terrible moral enormity for him to vote to expunge when the constitution expressly declared that "each house shall keep a journal."* Such was the sacrificial disposition which statesmen showed to throw themselves under the wheels of that great Juggernaut of federal compact; perish the heavens, sooner than permit the slightest crack in the precious porcelain bequeathed by our fathers. In fact, through Tyler's whole political career to this point one may discern the habit of moving upon fine and subtle distinctions, such as a special pleader delights in, a squirrel-like propensity to leap from tree to tree without touching the ground. Like the squirrel's bushy tail, he carried his record behind him; and one agony of his conscience was to reconcile his later acts with his earlier, regardless of the saying that only simpletons never change their opinions.

Tyler's warmest biographer and eulogist, his surviving son,† supplies the key to the new President's eccentric administration. He was fired with the ambition to become his own successor, and in order to lead the Whigs to select him Clay must be supplanted. Clay and he soon crossed swords, each bent on the mastery and aware of the other's purpose: they parted, and the Whig party could hold both no longer. Was it not impious, was it not ungrateful, for this youth to attempt to guide the chariot of the sun; indeed, to take the reins from the hands of his benefactor, the leader he had wept for? But Tyler had vanity, self-love in abundance, tact and complacency, and full belief in his run of luck. Though giving the impression of a showy and superficial statesman rather than a strong one, he had really more talent than he gained credit for; what he had not was the confidence of the people. A clique of

* See letter of resignation in 1836, 50 Niles, 28.
† Tyler's Tyler, chap. ii.

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personal friends, Virginians, his intimates, set him playing this new rôle of Phæton; and their object was to bend his administration to Virginia and themselves. Wise, Gilmer, Upshur, Beverly Tucker, were of this clique; names not one of them, respectable though they might be, identified in any way with the general concerns of the country, except the first; and Wise himself was chiefly known as a man of whimsies, the pallid shade of John Randolph. If this coterie regarded Tyler as one of superior fibre, their published utterances fail to show it. They played upon his vanity; they plied him incessantly to seize the full opportunities which accident had offered; to change the whole Whig programme,—reorganize his cabinet, take the party out of the hands of its recognized leaders. Webster they wished used to crush Clay and then be hurled after him; in fine, John Tyler should make himself his own successor, confirm himself by his distribution of the patronage, build up his own following, and give the lead of affairs, as in other days, to the Old Dominion.* A mischievous programme this, and full of treachery; nor was there the feeblest chance that Tyler could be chosen for another term, unless, perchance, as the faithful and honorable executor of Harrison's policy.

The new President hesitated for a time; good nature and good faith kept him balancing. His first acts which we have touched upon afford proof that he was anxious

* See 2 Tyler's Tyler, chap. ii; also Wise's Decades, 181, etc. The narrative of Wise, written in old age, bears many marks of haste and a failing memory, and one should hardly trust it, except in connection with the safer materials which have been brought to light by John Tyler's son and biographer. Wise states that the new President was advised at once to form a new cabinet, to hasten a settlement with Great Britain, and with that view to retain Webster at the head of the new cabinet, to annex Texas as soon as possible, veto any recharter of the United States Bank, any tariff for protection, and any bill for the distribution of the proceeds of the sale of the public lands. "He concurred in every proposition, except that of dismissing the then existing cabinet" (Decades, 181). Tyler's biographer, while quoting this book with frequent approbation, seems hardly aware that Wise makes himself out the guiding genius of this administration.

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to harmonize with the great Whig majority. But Tyler had a good conceit of himself and a lively fancy, and knew how to be both stubborn and adroit; moreover, some things happened which irritated him. Many Whigs were disposed to belittle his new authority, to treat him as a sort of regent and no more. The cabinet notice which summoned him on his predecessor's death addressed him as "Vice-President;"* and when he took his new oath of office he reserved the right of considering himself President without any such ceremony.† When Congress met and the discussion was started whether to address him as "Vice-President exercising the office of President," Wise took up the challenge; John Tyler, he said, would claim that he was "by the constitution, by election, and by the act of God President of the United States."‡ The title thus asserted was finally sustained.

But the shock of collision came with Clay, and just as Congress prepared to assemble. The great Kentuckian was already resolved to lead his party, to be its next Presidential candidate. He surmised from various rumors that Tyler thought of contesting the palm,§ and he meant to drive the Virginian before him. He prepared his own programme for the extra session. This programme embraced a new National Bank after the former general pattern. Bank and a currency were, of course, the absorbing issue of this extra session; and Tyler had been growing nervous and uncertain on the subject. Twenty-two years before, when a political youngster, he had made a speech against the National Bank, and how could he reconcile it?‖ In campaign speeches he had urged cur-

1841.

* 2 Tyler's Tyler, 12. † 2 Statesman's Manual, 1394.

‡ Congressional Globe, May 31, 1841.

§ 10 Adams's Memoirs, April 20, 1841.

‖ To take Tyler's record somewhat more in detail on the National Bank. In 1819 he was disgusted with the corruption of that institution; but in 1828 he praised the policy of Cheves, which had once more made it sound and satisfactory. In 1834 he appears to have been disposed to a constitutional amendment which would overcome all scruples and establish the Bank firmly. His report of December, 1834,

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rency reform and denounced the independent treasury, but stopped at this half-way house. What was the natural meaning of his inaugural letter? One would have said to leave Congress to frame its policy and interpose no veto. What was the example of "the fathers of the great Republican school," Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, Virginians all, but to yield to the logic of necessity in favor of such a bank,—the last two explicitly, the former in silence? But the new President had been anxiously conferring since with his friends. Beverly Tucker had concocted a money "compact" between the States on this subject which Wise thought a magnificent scheme, but Clay rejected for the sound reason that any fiscal agency founded on the assumption that Congress has no right to create it must do business on an imaginary credit.* Disposed at first to let the whole subject devolve on Congress, the new President yielded to pressure from his clique, and asked Tucker to draw out his plan in detail.† It was a hopeless undertaking; not one of the Whig cabinet, not a single Whig leader, thought favorably of it. Finally, Tyler fell back upon a device of the late Judge White, with which the public was somewhat familiar; this met nice constitutional scruples by establishing the main bank or agency in Washington, upon federal soil, under the direct sanction of Congress. A majority of the cabinet appear to have yielded reluctantly to this plan; Webster, however, giving it his hearty support.‡ The new President, by his own tale, went quickly from the passive to

April. May.

praised the condition of the Bank at the time when the deposits were removed. But his defenders say that Tyler was still opposed to the Bank and to renewing its charter, but while it existed he wanted to do it justice; which was close trimming. At all events, Tyler's favorable report, added to his persecution over the expunging resolution, did the most to give him the Whig nomination for Vice-President in 1840. See 1 Tyler's Tyler, 506, etc.

* 2 Tyler's Tyler, 30; April 15, 1841. Clay's letter argues in favor of an old-fashioned National Bank. "The objection to its constitutionality is now confined to Virginia. Ought not our friends there to yield to Mr. Madison's view of that question?"

† 2 Tyler's Tyler, 32, 33.

‡ Ib.

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the active mood on this most momentous of party questions.* The extra session, in fine, found him prepared to meet Congress with a bank proposal of his own.

But when Congress convened under the call of the late President, Henry Clay, ambitious of the honors, brought his own party programme. He had scented the intrigue of the new President's personal friends.† To submit to Harrison, who was fortified by the plenitude of power and personal honesty, and had pledged himself, moreover, was one thing; but that John Tyler should set himself up as a rival and dictator was intolerable, and the more so when Webster stood back of him. The Virginian needed more than his usual nerve and suavity of manner to bear the ordeal of the interview which must needs precede practical business. Two flints clashed and struck fire; the friendship of twenty years was gone. This interview was at the White House, just as the session opened; the President urged his plan of a district bank upon Clay in the strongest manner; Clay stubbornly declared he would not adopt it, the President stood on his official dignity, and they parted in anger.‡ This interview and this parting bear very closely upon the public events which soon transpired.

May.

Beneath the tissue of contradictions which envelops the inner history of this extra session it is hard to trace the truth; but we shall essay the task. Congress assembled on the appointed day, with a quorum in both branches, and the Whigs dominant. John White, of Kentucky, was at once chosen Speaker of the House

May 31.

* See his letter cited; 2 Tyler, 32.

† 2 Tyler, 30.

‡ As Tyler's Tyler, 33, describes the scene, the President took fire at Clay's contumacy, and exclaimed, "Go you now, then, to your end of the avenue, where stands the capitol, and there perform your duty to the country as you shall think proper. So help me God, I shall do mine at this end of it as I shall think proper!" On Clay's behalf no account has been left of the meeting. It is added in the Tyler narrative that no words ever again passed between them. But see 10 Adams's Diary, 515, *contra*.

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by a *vivâ voce* vote; and the former clerk, Matthew St. Clair Clarke, superseded Garland. In the Senate, Southard, of New Jersey, whilom of the Monroe cabinet, was made President *pro tem.*, a post important at length in its possibilities. The Whigs took their first responsibility under good auspices; their majority was seven in the Senate and nearly fifty in the House, and Executive and legislature seemed in full accord. The party had prospered since the last fall, half rescuing Virginia in the spring elections from the tenacious Democracy. Had Harrison lived, no doubt the Whig policy, for better or worse, would have been quietly saddled upon the country in a few weeks.

John Tyler's message, brought in by his son as private secretary, had all the crape and mournful decency which befits a residuary legatee who fears the will may be disputed. It spoke beautifully of the departed, whose last purpose to bring together the combined wisdom of these two Houses made him happy, too, to meet them. His own advice was to leave the tariff alone for the present; to distribute the proceeds of the public lands among the States so as to help them pay off their debts and regain their credit, though it would be unconstitutional and wrong for the Union to make the slightest approach to assuming those debts; and to make some needful changes in the banking system of the federal District. On the Bank subject he spoke, so it seemed, like a good Whig, but there was a snake of subtle reservation underneath. The sub-treasury he abhorred, and wished to see it repealed; his idea of a "suitable fiscal agent" in its place was faintly defined, and yet he expressed a distinct belief that some such agency would be required for collecting and disbursing the public revenue, taking custody of the public moneys, and establishing a currency of uniform value. The covert hint that any unconstitutional measure would compel his veto was hardly noticed, so confidingly did he submit this entire question to Congress, while he volunteered his disgust that State banks had been multiplying in the country so fast of late. The specious strain of this whole message, in short, was polite, complimentary, June 1.

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and softly pathetic. The people, simple folk, imagined that Tyler would follow Harrison's plans with as much sad reverence as he had followed his hearse. Most Whigs, too, knowing nothing of what was passing behind the scenes, accepted this as a National Bank message; and so did the Democrats, for Benton, in the Senate, at once opened fire upon Tyler for deserting his former record. More than this, the Treasury report which accompanied the Presidential message proposed distinctly to the country a National Bank.*

Clay, better apprised of the situation, led calmly on to his purpose. The first week did not pass before his Whig programme for the extra session was submitted in the Senate; the same substantially that he had prepared at home as early as April. This he offered in the form of a resolve, which set forth six subjects for the sole occupation of the session: (1) the repeal of the sub-treasury act; (2) the incorporation of a bank adapted to the wants of the people and the government; (3) some provision for raising an adequate revenue by means of new duties and a temporary loan; (4) a prospective distribution among the States of the proceeds of public lands; (5) the passage of the needful appropriation bills; (6) some modification of the banking system in the District of Columbia. And he proposed that this business should be so distributed between the two Houses as to expedite its transaction. This budget, while mainly acceptable to the party, which looked upon Clay as the leader, provoked a Tylerite dissent here and there, for it coolly ignored the existence of a Presidential incumbent; and Caleb Cushing, who was a friend of Webster, and disposed to march off, soon took occasion to declare in a speech that he recognized no administration of this government but that of John Tyler.†

June.

The first subject on this programme Clay had himself

* Ex. documents, Twenty-seventh Congress; 2 Statesman's Manual; 60 Niles.

† 2 Benton; 60 Niles; Cong. Globe.

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taken in hand by reporting from the finance committee a bill to repeal the independent treasury. This was placed first on the Senate calendar. All leading Whigs were committed to this repeal, and so was the President; and it was like burning the bridge behind them, for by this act was repealed also Jackson's "pet bank" system. The bill passed both branches by large majorities; and receiving the President's signature, took its place as the first distinctive national measure ever carried by the Whigs as a party.* June 4.

This repeal led the way to the fiscal establishment which was meant to be the chief consummation of the session, the capstone of Whig policy. But here the fierce contention of Clay and Tyler soon forced a crisis. Clay's plan accorded with the general expectation, and doubtless a great majority of the Whigs in and out of Congress believed by this time that the same Bank after the old pattern was an agency indispensable. Only Virginia Whigs were recalcitrant, and the election results absolved the victors from all obligation to regard their wishes. Harrison, unpledged as he had been through the long canvass, and with decided leanings against the former Bank establishment, seems to have acquiesced at last in this necessity and his cabinet gave their unanimous sanction. But the infamy of Biddle's insolvent Bank was a stench in the nostrils; at this very moment its unfaithful officers were pursued with criminal process, while the banks of Maryland and other States southward which had leaned upon it too implicitly were writhing in convulsions of agony. Clay would have had a new monster bank, located this time in Wall Street. Tyler, on the other hand, was groping among the impossibilities to find some fiscal agency which he could reconcile with his record, and with State

* Act August 13, 1841. A bill authorizing a loan of $12,000,000 in six per cent notes passed somewhat earlier. Act July 21, 1841. Clay, in debate, had expressed his conviction that after this repeal a National Bank was the only alternative.

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supremacy. It would have been wiser for the Whigs to take time to mature some scheme different from all former ones; but Clay was impatient, and no idea occurred to any one but that of a central bank having State branches.

That the cabinet sincerely wished to meet the new President's scruples is certain; and mortified though Clay may have been, he yielded somewhat, but not entirely, to the general wishes of his friends in the effort for harmony. President Tyler wished Congress to call upon the Secretary of the Treasury for the plan of a bank; Wise, his mentor, made the motion in the House; Clay followed in the Senate. The Secretary responded speedily; and his report covered the draft of a bill to incorporate the "Fiscal Bank of the United States." That draft Ewing himself prepared with Webster's aid, the President approved it, and every member of the cabinet honorably concurred in it.* It was modelled upon the Judge White plan. It differed from the former Bank in these two leading aspects, to avoid constitutional objections: (1) the seat of incorporation was to be the District of Columbia; (2) the power to establish branches would require the assent of the respective States. The amount of capital named for this institution was $30,000,000, its privilege of discount and exchange was to be like that of the former Bank of the United States. This report and draft were referred by the Senate, on Clay's motion, to the select finance committee, of which he was the chairman. But instead of such a bill, this committee reported one of their own, at the same time stating that the Secretary's draft had suggested some valuable improvements, of which they had availed themselves. The Bank, by this bill, was to be established in the District of Columbia, with the name proposed by the Secretary; its capital was fixed at $30,000.000, with leave to increase to $50,000,000; in all essential features the two bills were alike, except that which made the assent of the States

June 5–7.

June 12.

June 21.

* 2 Tyler's Tyler, 44; Webster's speech of September, 1842; 2 Curtis's Webster, 69, 72; Wise's Decades, 185.

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indispensable for establishing local branches. It was too late, argued Clay's committee, to claim that a United States Bank was unconstitutional or inexpedient; and no bill would effectually establish the bank now proposed which did not clearly recognize the right of Congress to establish branches wherever in the Union the public in its own judgment wanted them.*

The point at issue between Clay and the Executive was thus reduced practically to the fundamental question of establishing branches with or without asking a State's permission. If the President was understood, a State must assent or dissent; but after it had once assented was that assent irrevocable? and would the State branch remain liable after it was once set up to be shut out again at pleasure? Clay's stand on this question was the only consistent one; for if the federal constitution gave Congress no adequate power in the premises, no consent of a separate State could confer it. But his party friends were bent upon reconciling views, if they could, by honoring the President's peculiar tenets without assenting to his logic. Accordingly, after an amendment offered by Rives, which required State assent, had been voted down, Choate and Bayard, two friends of Webster, supporting it, while Clay refused tenaciously to yield, a hybrid sort of provision was introduced in its stead. Clay made a show of gracious concession in accepting this last; Secretary Ewing had, in fact, prepared the phrase at the instance of John M. Botts, of Virginia, one of the House finance committee; but so far from sanctioning himself any such compromise, the President appears to have rejected it.† Thus happily framed, as many thought, the Bank bill passed the Senate by 26 to 23, and the House by 128 to 97; and went to the President for his signature.‡

July.

July 6.

July 27.

July 28.

August 6.

* 1 Cong. Debates; 2 Statesman's Manual; 2 Tyler's Tyler, 44.

† 2 Tyler's Tyler, 65–70.

‡ 60 Niles's Register; Cong. Debates; 2 Tyler's Tyler; 2 Statesman's Manual, 1403. This so-called compromise related to what was

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It is likely that Clay had put less confidence in this asserted compromise than most of his party friends; for he knew that the present struggle looked beyond the Bank, and that Webster's ponderous strength was enlisted to crush him. For Tyler's cobweb distinctions he felt nothing but contempt,* nor was he disposed to yield to him the fame of originating party measures. Clay's violent temper had yielded, it is true, to persuasion; this Bank measure as passed was not what he had projected; yet the vital point of difference was not yielded by it. The compromise which Ewing had essayed was not flattering to Tyler's intelligence, and as Tyler had not assented, he was at liberty not to feel bound by it.† The President did not want intrepidity; his pride was already nettled; and yet he seemed to hesitate at the Rubicon. He retained the bill nearly long enough for it to become a law in spite of him. The Whigs dreaded a veto,‡ all the more so when they found he was closeted constantly with leaders of the opposition; but they sent delegations to the White House to plead with him. One of these told the President frankly what they feared. Tyler protested his intense feeling, spoke of the difficulties in his way, wept, and promised to pray for guidance. "Why did you not send me the Ewing bill?" he asked, tearfully. "Would you sign that bill?" asked one of the delegation. "I would," he replied. And yet Gilmer, of the clique, who had access to the inner chamber, wrote home in confidence the very day after the House passed this bill that the President would veto it,

called the sixteenth fundamental rule of the eleventh section, as contained in the two bills of Ewing and Clay. It provided that the directors might establish a branch in any State with the assent of such State; that assent once given to be irrevocable without the consent of Congress, provided (1) that the power to establish should be good in any State whose legislature did not at its earliest session express its dissent, and (2) that whenever Congress deemed it necessary and proper under the constitution to establish a branch in any State it might so direct.

* Clay's Priv. Corr., 452–454.

† See 2 Tyler's Tyler, 44.

‡ 10 Adams's Diary, 531.

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and that his veto would come out the next week. "I know this," he said, with emphasis, "and am one of the very few who do know it; he has done me the honor to consult me confidentially about measures and men here, and freely."*

The truth is that this little knot of Virginian acquaintances who had the President's private ear were all the time widening the breach between him and the party to which he owed his place. Their union with the Whigs had never been more than the cohesion of malcontents, and they were full already of great, swelling plans for reconstructing parties anew on the line of State rights, southern expansion, and the revival of old Virginia's supremacy. Novices in moulding public opinion, they mounted the chariot of State by the side of Tyler and took up the reins with him in an easy, dare-devil style, which he did not discourage. Whither they should direct these horses of the sun they hardly thought yet, but Clay was to be first expelled, and violently, and after him, Webster, but Webster more gently. A more reckless and profligate scheme never took the wind of opportunity in our national politics; and whether Calhoun lent the brains for it will never be known. Calhoun, at least, and not Tyler, was the sun-god of these roisterers.† Tyler's position, of course, made him indispensable to their plans; but Tyler was impulsive, loquacious, and with a vanity easily inflamed; and inflexible as he could show himself when put upon his mettle, his set felt confident of leading him, and leading him by the nose, through those genial arts of courtesy and good-fellowship to which, as a southern gentleman, he was always susceptible.‡

* 2 Tyler's Tyler, 706. Thomas W. Gilmer, lately governor of Virginia, had just entered the House of Representatives. We shall soon see him called into the cabinet.

† See 2 Tyler's Tyler, 37, 40, 45, 707, etc., letters of Wise, Gilmer, and others.

‡ See Wise's Decades, 187–193. Wise says that Tyler proved himself no "nose of wax" in this Bank business; and yet Wise's whole narrative conveys the idea that John Tyler was wax to his touch. A large

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While Wise, in the House, prepared the way for a veto,* the President's genial disposition and the spark of dying virtue kept him balancing his cavils against the Bank. But Clay he was determined to rebuke. On the 16th of August his veto message was brought into the Senate through a crowd which besieged the entrance. It was read in the midst of excitement and disorder. The President's argument seemed to advance a new step beyond the original Ewing bill in expressing a dislike of local discounts; but the veto, as anticipated, was grounded mainly upon the sixteenth fundamental section of Clay's bill, which even in the compromise form used, as Tyler expressed it, the language of "the master to the vassal;" for it asserted the right, which he denied, of establishing offices of deposit and discount in the several States with or without their assent. He, the President, had given his solemn oath to defend the constitution, and he could not "conscientiously," he could not without "a crime," sign such a bill as the present.†

Aug. 16.

After postponing action from day to day, the Senate, on the 19th, refused to pass this first Bank bill over the President's veto by a vote of 25 to 25. The Whigs, though sore dismayed, were already employing every effort to concert some new measure which might bring Congress and the administration to common ground. It was when

Aug. 19.

Roman nose was an impressive feature of the President's face to friends and enemies. See 2 Tyler, chaps. 2–4, and particularly the private letters of Wise and his friends from June to August. Wise, June 5th, considers that Tyler and Clay are already disposed to fight it out. Clay, he says, has consummate nerve and ability to stand alone, but Webster has not and flies before him. "We humble the latter to us and must combat the former." Again Wise writes, July 11th, in glee, that the time for compromise is passed; and that Tyler can now throw even the Ewing bill overboard, and that he wants nothing so much as to have Clay's bill come to him and kill it by a veto.

* Cong. Debates; 60 Niles, 406. Here he argued that the Whig party of 1840 was made up of two coequal elements,—"Tippecanoe, and Tyler, too,"—the nationals and the strict constructionists, and that "Tippecanoe" being dead, "Tyler, too," liveth.

† 60 Niles; Cong. Debates.

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alluding to this fact, on the day the vote was taken, that Clay, who stood aside to see what others might accomplish, claimed most earnestly that the compromise clause had been accepted by him in a genuine spirit of conciliation. He recalled the compliant language of Tyler's inaugural letter on this subject, and contrasted it with the tenor of the veto message. The President's conscience, he remarked with a touch of irony, was far too tender, in holding it a crime to follow Madison's example and sign the bill as it came to him; and even then he might have allowed the bill to become a law without his signature at all, or as a last resort preserve his honor by resigning his office, as he had done in the Senate when Virginia sent him instructions on the expunging resolution. Was Virginia the only State to be obeyed, the only constituency to be respected? To this Rives responded with a eulogy of the President for his veto, which drew from the Whig leader a more impassioned rejoinder. Half-playfully, half-bitterly, he charged that a cabal was at work with the President, "a corporal's guard," seeking as his kitchen cabinet to force a personal quarrel and to bring a dissolution of the Whig party and a change in the whole face of affairs. Rives retorted that the rumor he had heard charged a dictatorship at the capitol, seeking to govern the country and intimidate the President.* These epithets, the "corporal's guard" and the "dictator," were bandied about in politics for the next three years.

Meantime the Whigs of the House were fairly striving to arrange a settlement, having no quarrel, no rivalry, to sustain. For a moment the prospect seemed to brighten. John Tyler had more than once pledged himself in substance to the Ewing plan,† and Wise relates that he wavered in his wish to conciliate, but had no clear ideas on the constitutional point.‡ His conscience was groping among legal abstractions. Rives, it appears, broached a plan (founded on a recent decision of the Supreme Court) which

* Cong. Debates; 60 Niles; 2 Benton.

† See 2 Tyler, 50.

‡ Wise's Decades, 187–193.

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distinguished between operations in local discount and foreign exchange; its cardinal idea being that branch offices of a National Bank might carry on the latter but not the former business rightfully under a Congressional sanction aside from State permission.* At the same time that this refinement of constitutional metaphysics engaged the President, Berrien, of the Senate, and John Sergeant, of the House, Whigs of the highest personal standing, were deputed by a caucus to wait on the President and ascertain pre-
Aug. 16–18. cisely what sort of bill he would assent to. Stuart, of Virginia, a warm personal friend, had already procured a private audience at which was outlined such a bill as Rives had proposed; and to him the President said, with much unction, "Now, if you will send me this bill I will sign it in twenty-four hours."† The interview of Berrien and Sergeant at the White House was equally satisfactory, and confirmed this idea of the President's wishes. They pre-
Aug. 18–19. pared a new Bank bill accordingly, which cut down the capital to $21,000,000, provided for local agencies instead of offices for discount and deposit,‡ and limited the branch dealings to foreign and inter-State bills of exchange. This bill Webster and Ewing took part in framing, having been deputed to do so by President Tyler at a cabinet meeting, held just after the interview, in
Aug. 18. which the whole principle was discussed, and the President distinctly stated that the idea of an exchange bank met his approval.§ This House bill was even more

* 2 Tyler, 72, where the cloudy theory is set out at length; 13 Peters, 519.

† 2 Tyler, 77. "Stuart," said Tyler, holding his friend's hand as they parted, "if you can be instrumental in passing this bill through Congress, I will esteem you the best friend I have on earth!" Ib.

‡ The assent of States, Webster had said, was not requisite to establish agencies. 62 Niles, 245.

§ Such is the unbroken testimony of Tyler's cabinet, also of Berrien and Sergeant (Webster alone being reticent), on this point. 61 Niles, 35, 55; 62 ib., 245. On the President's behalf it was claimed long after that he instructed Webster and Ewing to keep him entirely uncommitted. 2 Tyler, 82. But neither the law of honor nor the familiar

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scrupulous on the constitutional point than the Ewing draft, which embodied the President's earliest ideas; so much so, indeed, that with Webster's sanction the word "bank" was now dropped altogether, and "corporation" substituted. No jest nor slur was intended by this last ridiculous title; the absurdity lay in the President's own posture, for which the Whigs tried to veil their disdain. This bill for a "Fiscal Corporation" Sergeant introduced from his committee; it passed without alteration within three days under the operation of the previous question and was sent at once to the Senate.* Here, however, as in the House, it was observed that the Presidential squad used every effort to obstruct and defeat this bill; Rives, like Wise and Gilmer in the other branch, turned against it, and he was joined by Calhoun, aided, of course, by the Benton anti-Bank Democrats, whose aim was to foment all the dissension possible among their party adversaries. Berrien, however, as chairman of a select committee, reported it back favorably without amendment; whereupon Clay gave it his clear support, as a measure which at least would afford the people a means of regulating exchange and supplying a sound and uniform currency. Cavils were in the air that, perhaps, after all, this bill might be tortured into the establishment

Aug. 20–23.

Sept. 1–3.

rules of agency in such a case can justify secret reservations of authority against Congress. What the President himself would assent to had been the only object of all these interviews and of the cabinet meeting. Ewing, Bell, and Badger agree, however, that it was understood that Ewing and Webster should not commit the President any further than to trust his public acts,—*i.e.* to rely on his honor,—because he did not wish to seem to dictate to Congress. This was where Tyler prevaricated so as afterwards to slip out altogether, after the bill had been framed, as though it were not his bill at all. Point by point, Ewing said afterwards, he and the President went over the subject, so as to be sure they agreed on the details. At Webster's suggestion some slight alterations were made in the bill at the last moment, of which Tyler was informed. The President thought them of no moment.

* Cong. Globe; 2 Statesman's Manual; 60 Niles. Sergeant had this new bill grafted by amendment upon an old one which had been long pending. The final vote of the House stood 125 to 94.

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of just such a bank as the Clay Whigs had been striving for.*

Tyler, indeed, was shifting and shuffling from some motive more subtle than the desire to keep his phenomenal conscience on its chosen track; and from the Ewing bill and every other bank expedient which had been proposed he heartily wished to escape altogether. Webster found him worried and agitated,† and both Webster and the President used all their baffling influence to bear upon Congress that this subject might be laid over for the session. Clay's friends suspected the worst, but they pressed the new bill to a vote in the Senate. All amendments were voted down, and the House bill passed unchanged; it was

Sept. 3. for the President to keep or violate his faith.‡ He chose the latter alternative, and in six days returned the Fiscal Corporation bill to the House with a

Sept. 9. second veto. While offering many captious objections, his message suggested no basis of agreement with Congress. He protested still that his only motive for a veto was his constitutional conviction, his imperious obligation under oath. He would rather perish in upholding our institutions, he said, than win applause by sacrificing his conscience.§ The bill failed of a needful two-thirds the next day to carry it over the veto,‖ and a second time was

Sept. 10. the Whig Congress balked of its purpose by their accidental President, whose vow was still warm not to use the Executive power for resisting its wishes;¶ and

* For these cavils, which are not worth repeating, see 2 Tyler's Tyler, 87. The most important of them was that a discount business might practically be introduced under the cover of dealings in exchange. See Coleman's Crittenden, 159.

† Curtis's Webster, 69, 72, etc.; 2 Tyler, 89.

‡ Cong. Globe; 61 Niles. The bill passed the Senate by 27 to 22.

§ Cong. Globe; 2 Statesman's Manual.

‖ Ib. The House vote stood 103 to 80 on this question.

¶ Tyler, in the canvass of 1840 and since, had, like Harrison, condemned Jackson's course in opposing his individual will to that of Congress, and repeatedly announced the purpose to depart from that example. See 61 Niles, 76.

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if the first veto was needful to maintain his dignity, the second announced him perfidious and uncompromising. If his conscience was sensitive on the point of obedience to the constitution, it was far from sensitive on the obligations he owed to the Whig party.

There was a reproachful strain in this second message, as though the majority were crowding him hard. Had not these summer weeks been fruitful of important acts, in all of which, brief though his space to deliberate, he had concurred, except the present? This was, indeed, the truth. For besides the sub-treasury repeal, the Whigs had fairly carried out the rest of Clay's programme. They had supplied the urgent wants of the treasury by a loan, provided for fortifications and the navy, and extended the District facilities for banking; passing, in addition, a new bankruptcy bill to please Webster and a few others of the party.* Clay had disliked this last measure, but used it to gain votes for the measure he had so closely at heart; namely, a money distribution to the States. That hobby had been very useful in the Harrison canvass, and the bill passed at this session, its idea being to divide annually among all members of the Union the net proceeds from the sales of public lands. Unfortunately for its author, as we shall presently find, the low-tariff Whigs tacked a safety-valve proviso to this gift to protect the Calhoun compromise; this annual distribution should cease of effect whenever the tariff duties were raised again above twenty per cent.† No tariff act was passed, but a temporary one to provide for a deficiency.‡ Twenty-four acts and six joint resolutions in all received the President's signature before the final adjournment. It was a busy dog-day session, and the Whig majorities of the two Houses

May 31–Sept. 13.

* Act August 19, 1841; 2 Benton, 229.

† Act Sept. 4, 1841. The more enduring feature of this act was the grant of pre-emption rights to settlers on a broad and permanent footing. This policy, too, the Whigs had espoused in 1840.

‡ Act Sept. 11, 1841.

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drove their work with quick despatch, unhindered by dissensions, save on the fiscal measure.

Yet, after all, the fiscal measure should have been the crowning one of the session. On no topic of the day was general expectation so wrought up, and on none was the line of demarcation so strong between Whigs and Democrats. To quote Webster himself, the currency question was the great question before the country,* and to adjourn unable to solve it, and splitting in the endeavor, was the bitterest party humiliation. Taking our young chief magistrate as one who wished to accord with the majority, but could not in conscience, he may be gently dealt with; for, to be candid, the Whig scheme was a crude one, and with ampler reflection might have been improved upon. But it had strong merits, united the party as no substitute could have done, and was shorn down the second time to the last clip to please all strict constructionists whose minds admitted of any National Bank at all. Our best and mature experience corrects the extremes of both party schools of this day. The bank of the old model, to be sure, became soon, as Webster stigmatized it, "an obsolete idea;" but the United States will never again abdicate in favor of a State paper currency, nor try to humor the people into the notion of dispensing with paper altogether. As for John Tyler's constitutional distinctions, they are not worth refutation, being of the flimsiest texture, cobwebs crossed by cobwebs. Only a casuist in morals can do justice to a public conscience like his, and we look elsewhere for the motives of his action. We find them in the unfortunate rivalry and rupture with Clay, in the new conceit of his ambition to originate a policy which would place him foremost with the people, in the marplot energy of his Virginia clique to reconstruct national parties in his name, and with the help of the public patronage, his splendid windfall. From the day he was installed influences were pulling him towards the rake's progress. In his veering state of mind, already guarded by prevaricating pledges,† the

* 61 Niles, 55.

† *Supra*, p. 386.

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President did not keep long, we fancy, to the exchange bank idea, which the second bill embodied. Clay's speech,* which had been put off while the Sergeant negotiation was pending, irritated him by its sharp truths. The first Bank bill, as it went to him, he had already been disposed to regard as an insult. A private letter which found its way from Richmond into the Washington papers at a most unlucky moment next incensed him so greatly that he threw to the winds the patching-up policy which was gaining him no reputation. The letter was from John Minor Botts, of the House, to a constituent in Virginia, touching off the situation in a familiar way. It described "Captain Tyler" as making desperate efforts to reach the loco-focos, but added that he could be "headed" yet; a simile which gave the ludicrous sense that the Whigs were trying to turn the President back like some obstinate animal running in the wrong direction. A hint like this, and from a Virginian, too, intimate enough to have been a bedfellow,† was like a spark in Tyler's present frame of mind; he wanted to play honors with the Whigs, and could not afford to be laughed at. "I would rather cut my right hand off," he was now heard to declare, "than approve the pending bill." Ewing and Webster‡ seem to have agreed that Botts's ill-timed exposure (which, after all, was not far from the truth) drove the President straight over to the mischief-makers; but by their own account they held him fast enough already.§ In truth, admitting, as

August 19.

August 21.

* *Supra*, p. 385.

† Botts and Tyler slept in the same room at the overcrowded hotel when Harrison was inaugurated. 2 Tyler, 105–110. Botts asserted afterwards that Tyler at that time avowed that he was well disposed towards a National Bank.

‡ 61 Niles, 35; 2 Curtis's Webster, 69, 72.

§ He did try, relates Wise, to pacify the Whigs, to reconcile them upon the Rives plan; but when Wise knew of it he told the President that it was all an ingenious device for re-establishing a National Bank, and that he had much better waive his scruples, as Madison had done, and sign a plain bill, than sanction any hybrid scheme like this. Tyler, he adds, concurred in this view, and then sent Wise with a message to Sergeant just before the bill was introduced in

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Webster has done, that not one in fifty of the Whigs in Congress but meant to make a comprehensible bill to which the President would assent, Tyler on this compromise bill was driven to the dilemma of falsifying or making his doubts ridiculous, and hence his effort to postpone, which the Whigs would not consent to. The language of his second veto message was incoherent; he wrote it in a tremor for the consequences. In proof of his sincerity, it is said that he offered to insert in it a pledge to retire at the end of his term, and his cabinet did not care for it;* but this only shows that his mind attached an importance to such a sacrifice; and at all events the impulse to stand aside shifted more quickly than the wish to gain credit for it.† Nothing, eventually, moulded, after all, the policy of this President so much as the wish to be re-elected; while nothing became more firmly fixed in the public mind than the certainty that he would not be.

Tyler's second veto forfeited the confidence of the Whigs, and Clay determined to drive him out of the party. Tyler's coterie welcomed the issue. "We are on the eve of a cabinet rupture," wrote Wise, gleefully, while the bill was still pending in Congress,‡ and at the very moment Ewing and the other official counsellors were trying to keep the peace the columns of the New York *Herald* teemed with foul abuse of them, betraying the inmost secrets of the cabinet; a sure sign that the cabal had lodged their influence inside the White House.§

August.

the House. But Sergeant did not keep the bill back. Wise's Decades, 187–193. To the extent, at least, that Wise's remonstrance impressed the President, this story is quite probable.

* 2 Tyler, 26.

† Tyler is said to have thought of making a similar pledge after Harrison's example, in his inaugural letter (2 Tyler); but the point most noticeable is that he was persuaded not to do so.

‡ Letter Aug. 29; 2 Tyler, 90.

§ It was believed at the time that Tyler's own sons (one of whom was his private secretary) instigated this Herald attack, which attracted great attention. 11 Adams's Diary, 14–20. John Howard Payne, the

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"Head Captain Tyler or die!" became a Whig injunction, half-jocular, half-pathetic. The second veto, not unexpected at the last, made the breach complete between the President and his party. It was decided upon Sept. 9. without consulting the cabinet. On the next day but one, four members of the cabinet—Ewing, Bell, Badger, and Crittenden—resigned peremptorily, after having conferred with Clay; Granger, at first dubious, decided to follow them, making the fifth; Webster alone remained. This happened on a Saturday, and the following Monday Congress had planned to adjourn. Clay hoped, perhaps, were the cabinet dissolution complete, that this casual incumbent of the Presidency, proving unable to form an administration, would be forced himself to resign. But the constitution was too strong a rock. Aided by Webster, President Tyler, on the following Monday, submitted a full list of names for the five cabinet vacancies which the Senate could not in consistency reject. It comprised Walter Forward, of Pennsylvania, for Secretary of the Treasury; John McLean, of Ohio, Secretary of War; Abel P. Upshur, of Virginia, Secretary of the Navy; Charles A. Wickliffe, of Kentucky, Postmaster-General; Hugh S. Legaré, of South Carolina, Attorney-General. The list was at once confirmed. Justice McLean declining, John C. Spencer, of New York, took the War portfolio, which was tendered him after Congress adjourned. One of Tyler's early associates in Congress, but at present an official in New York State, with a high reputation for energy and unbending honor, Spencer took prudent counsel of his friends before accepting;* Forward's appointment was a promotion from first comptroller, the office to which the late Harrison had assigned him; Legaré was a jurist and a proficient scholar, like few of that day, in both the civil and common law; Wickliffe had a Sept. 11. Sept. 13.

poet, an intimate friend of these sons, and a correspondent of the Herald, was concerned in it also. 2 Tyler, chap. 4, which evades an explanation, confirms the impression as to Tyler's sons; denying, however, that the President personally had anything to do with that business.

* 63 Niles, 140; Seward's Biography, 565.

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fair public record in and out of Congress; Upshur, a respectable judge in Virginia, was the candidate of the Virginia cabal to be moved into Webster's place as soon as Webster could be moved out of it.* This cabinet did not want ability, could it only cohere; and Tyler boasted that his new counsellors, like himself, were original Jackson men.†

The Whigs of Congress before separating determined to issue an address to the people, reciting the pro-
Sept. 11. ceedings of the session and read the President out of the party. Kennedy, of Maryland, reported this address in caucus, and it was unanimously adopted. This and an open letter from Clay denounced the one-man power which had been resurrected to thwart the will of the people.‡ At the Whig convention of New
October. York State, held presently at Syracuse, Henry Clay was nominated for next President, and John Tyler was warned not to conduct his policy with a view to being rechosen. All the late members of the cabinet except Granger made statements through the press exposing Tyler's prevarication and perfidy, and revealing the secrets of the second Bank bill; Berrien and Sergeant corroborated them later.§ The fickle President was burned in effigy again and again, and Whig newspapers through the North held him up to execration as the Benedict Arnold of politics. It was a strange spectacle, this prompt secession of a party host from its traitorous commander, leaving the hard-earned treasure of the national patronage in his hands. No political movement on such a scale was ever like it. The exploit was Clay's, and the boldest of his whole life; it saved the Whig body from destruction and nearly accomplished its full ends. But the anabasis was toilsome

* 2 Tyler, 90. † 2 Tyler, 125. ‡ 61 Niles, 35, 67.

§ See 61 Niles, 33, 53; 62 ib., 245. This testimony, which has already been embodied in the narrative (not to add that of Wise's Decades), affords overwhelming proof that the President changed his mind from some cause after the cabinet meeting of August 18, and receded from his own compromise. Granger is understood to have concurred with his colleagues. 2 Statesman's Manual, 14, 16.

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and at first discouraging. The fall elections ran sorely against the Whigs, Maine, Georgia, and Maryland slipping from their control.*

Surprised, even piqued, at so wholesale a desertion,—for he had hoped to divide, at least, the lead with Clay,—the President still fancied himself a martyr for conscience' sake, and summoned all his fortitude to show a serene face to the people. He could not see that his traps to catch the sunbeam were plainly understood; that men of all parties saw through his pretty coquetry, his flirting behind the fan of the constitution, while pretending to use it as the screen of his honor. He bore abuse well: "My pulse," he wrote for the press, "has kept healthful music;" "the light reflected from burning effigies has only served to render the path of duty more plain."† Democrats in convention expressed their delight; both Jackson and Van Buren warmly congratulated him upon his vetoes, as well they might, but all were very wary of giving him any encouragement that the Democracy would range under his standard.‡ He was painfully isolated. There would have been no Tyler party left in the free States but for Webster, whose envious ambition kept him dallying awhile longer. Caleb Cushing, the friend of Webster, took up the cudgels for Tyler in the press, making war upon the "caucus dictatorship" of the late session. Webster in October. person was reticent. He gave two public reasons for not leaving the cabinet with his colleagues: that their reasons for retiring he thought insufficient, also that delicate negotiations were pending in his department which ought not abruptly to be left. The former reason was uppermost when he asked the advice of his Massachusetts delegation about remaining,§ but it was the latter that he most relied on in after years when he had to vindicate himself. Our Massachusetts giant, indeed, with all his wealth of intellect,

* Clay's Priv. Corr., 455.
† Letter Nov. 8, 1841; 61 Niles, 177.
‡ 2 Statesman's Manual; 61 Niles.
§ Sept. 10, 1841; 11 Adams's Diary, 13–16.

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was weak in force of will; he could silently crush or encumber, but he could not dare the gale. How little did he know, when he chained his strength to these hard taskmasters, the utter contempt in which they held him! He thought himself Virginia's potent ally, but it was more like Caliban's bondage to his new and reckless master.*

Sept. 11.

Happily for the Secretary of State, there were laurels to be won in his department. Our relations with Great Britain were still delicate when Harrison and the Whigs came into power. Maine was quietly waiting for the boundary dispute to be settled, when new troubles arose under Van Buren on the New York borders. In the course

* The recent revelations of John Tyler's biography, by his son (which is meant for a personal vindication), show that the President's politeness was Webster's slender reed of strength against Wise and the other Virginians who wanted the Massachusetts statesman "jilted," sent on some mission if possible, but got rid of very speedily, so that Upshur and Texas might come to the front. 2 Tyler, 118–121. Webster's popular influence at the North was wanted to offset Clay's, but the Tylers are at pains to show that it was more Webster's wish to stay than the President's to retain him that kept him in the cabinet. "Where am I to go, Mr. President?" asked the Secretary of State, as one after another of his colleagues surrendered their places. "You must decide that for yourself, Mr. Webster," was the reply. "If you leave it to me," rejoined Webster, eagerly, "I will stay where I am." "Give me your hand on that," exclaimed Tyler, rising from his chair and warmly extending his hand; "and now I will say to you that Henry Clay is a doomed man from this hour." Ib. This scene, if correctly described (and we have no other version of it), discloses the sinister motive of the partnership, from which the Secretary was glad at last to escape.

Spencer, the new Secretary of War, made the charge that the Clay Whigs responded to President Tyler's effort to get the second Bank bill postponed to the second session that they would do so if he would promise not to change his cabinet in the mean time. Spencer (knowing nothing personally of the matter) stated this for the President, whose friends afterwards repeated the charge. 2 Tyler. But Ewing and the Clay Whigs pronounced this a base calumny. 11 Adams's Diary, 279; 61 and 62 Niles.

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of the Canadian rebellion* an American steamboat, the "Caroline," transported men and supplies to Navy Island, in the Niagara River, which was used as a rendezvous for the insurgents. This island being under 1837. British jurisdiction, a royal expedition was organized to make capture of the "Caroline;" but the steamboat was found moored not at the island, but the neighboring American shore. This did not hinder the pursuit; and the "Caroline" was captured where she lay, set on 1837. Dec. fire, and sent drifting to destruction down the rapids and over Niagara Falls. For this outrage the British crown showed no disposition to make amends; but it so happened that during the fray an American named Durfree had lost his life; and when, nearly three years after, one Alexander McLeod, a deputy sheriff in Upper Canada, who had boasted of killing him, came 1840. November. into New York State, he was arrested by the civil authorities and lodged in Lockport jail to await his trial on the charge of murder. Great popular excitement prevailed in consequence of this new turn to the Canadian affair. The British government hereupon avowed the responsibility of the act, claimed McLeod as a British subject, and demanded his release of the President. It was now the turn of the United States to profess indifference; but when Harrison's administration came in, an effort was made to take McLeod from the hands of the New York authorities and have his case dealt with as 1841. a national affair. Seward, however, the Whig governor of the State, having the people of New York on his side, refused positively to give up the prisoner or to do more or less than see that McLeod had a fair trial.† Pending this collision of authority the national administration devolved upon Tyler, Lord Palmerston's peremptory demand arriving but a few days before President Harrison's last illness. A writ of *habeas corpus* was sued out by McLeod, and the federal district attorney appeared as his counsel, but the State court refused to discharge him. The pris-

* *Supra*, p. 317. † 2 Tyler, 206, etc.; 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 154.

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oner had a fair trial, and to the relief of two nations, closer to the verge of war than they had been at any time for twenty-five years, he was acquitted by the jury on proving an *alibi* and taken across the frontier in safety. An American citizen, seized in retaliation by armed Canadians at St. Albans, and forcibly carried over the line, was released about the same time.* To guard against future collisions of the kind, Congress soon after amended the judiciary act, so that offences committed under color of foreign authority and affecting foreign relations might be controlled by the federal courts.†

1841. Oct. 12.

Still another public controversy had arisen over Great Britain's new claim to exercise the "right of search" while suppressing the slave-trade, a point on which southern slaveholders were extremely tender. The difficulty was all the greater because an American vessel engaged in carrying slaves coastwise, as the laws of the United States permitted, might be forced by violence or stress of weather into a British port. Such an instance actually occurred in the first winter after Tyler's inauguration. The brig "Creole" sailed from Hampton Roads to New Orleans with a cargo of slaves on board; the slaves rose upon the master and crew, killed one man, overpowered the others, and steered for the British Bahamas. The governor at Nassau treated the captors as freemen, as human beings who had conquered their enslavers. This natural view the Queen's ministry sustained against the paradoxical demand of Tyler's Secretary of State for the negroes "as mutineers and murderers and the recognized property of citizens of the United States."‡ The common sense of civilized society was leaving this great republic behind.

1841-42.

Such were the disputes that had accumulated upon the long unsettled boundary with Great Britain, that most

* 1 Seward's Biography; President's Message, December, 1841; 2 Tyler.

† Act August 29, 1842; Secretary Webster drafted this statute. 2 Curtis's Webster.

‡ 2 Curtis's Webster; Buell's Giddings; 2 Benton's View.

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formidable and exasperating of all, which had nearly involved the pine-tree State in a war so recently.* The time was rapidly approaching when the north-eastern line at least would have to be settled or fought for; and following the temporary truce arranged by General Scott (for truce it was, and no more), negotiation had taken a fresh start on this mossy controversy. By Harrison's accession it was mutually agreed that there should be a new adjustment of some kind. But an attempt to adjust by sifting out the meaning of the treaty of 1783 was not likely to come to anything; for the truth was that through ignorance of the ridge course which ran north-easterly from the head of the Connecticut River the British commissioners had consented in that treaty to a line which would have brought the boundary close to the river St. Lawrence and cut off the military routes which joined Quebec to the province of New Brunswick;† and from the day that error was perceived the British government took every pains to prevent the agreement from being carried into effect, suffocating the true meaning of the treaty under a mass of conflicting proofs and surveys cunningly brought together. The King of the Netherlands, whose award America had rejected, opened, after all, the true way out of the difficulty by drawing an arbitrary compromise line based on the necessities of both nations, and leaving the old proofs and surveys alone. With this idea in mind, Webster took up the thread where Forsyth, his predecessor, had left it, and intimated to Great Britain that a conventional line would be accepted.

English tories have usually dealt more fairly by us than English liberals, and one reason, perhaps, is that their politics have lifted them out of the compass of jealous comparison. Whig to Whig was of little advantage, for conservatism in the British isle is full of prudish reserve against bold-faced America. In August, Lord Melbourne's administration under the Queen was displaced by Sir Robert Peel. The new ministry appreciated

1841. August.

* *Supra*, p. 317.

† See 2 Benton's View, 420.

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the advantage of scoring a point by their superior diplomacy. Lord Aberdeen took charge of foreign affairs in place of Palmerston, that sporting statesman, who made little of the gentler courtesies of life. Stevenson's intercourse with Lord Palmerston had not been altogether pleasant; but when the polished Everett arrived, negotiation took a more favorable footing. Edward Everett had been appointed by President Tyler while travelling on the continent, John Sergeant having first declined the position.* It was arranged in December by the Peel ministry that Lord Ashburton should be sent to Washington as a special minister from Great Britain, with full powers to settle the boundary and all other pending disputes with the United States. This mission, as well as the selection for it, was a high compliment to our country, for Ashburton, formerly Alexander Baring, of the eminent banking firm of Baring Brothers, and a son of its original founder, was now an old man, who had retired on a princely fortune, and being indifferent to fame, aspired only to bring these two countries to more friendly terms. Like his father before him, he had tact and plain good sense, and understood well the American character, having married here during his youth.* Lord Ashburton arrived early the next April, and on the 13th of June entered upon the duties of his mission. Maine and Massachusetts, the States most interested in the disputed boundary, sent commissioners of their own to yield an assent in this branch of the business. The whole business as conducted at our capital had an easy and informal character. Webster and Lord Ashburton represented alone their respective governments; no protocols were used, nor formal records; and the correspondence and official interviews went on after a friendly fashion in the heat of summer, and while Congress was holding its long regular session. The entire absence, in short, of condescension or distrust on the part of Great Britain did much to assuage the war-spirit of

September.

December.

1842.
April.
June.

* 2 Curtis's Webster; 2 Tyler. And see Ashburton to Clay, Clay's Priv. Corr., 460, 461.

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border States, and induce our government to accept results which, though not covering the whole ground of controversy, were conciliating as far as they went, and honorable to both sides. This Washington or Ashburton treaty, as it is called to this day, bore date of the day when it was formally signed. It passed by the Oregon or north-western boundary, a point on which harmony was impossible, and this was the most pregnant omission of all; it passed by the "Caroline" affair;* it ignored, too, the "Creole" case, for Great Britain would not consent to recognize the American claim of property in human beings. Nor, on the other side, were the debts of delinquent States assumed by the United States, as many British creditors had desired. Mutual extradition in crimes under the law of nations, and the delivery of fugitives from justice, were stipulated. But the two chief features of this treaty were: a settlement of the boundary between Great Britain and the United States on the north-east, extending westward beyond the great lakes, and a cruising convention for the mutual suppression of the slave-trade. As to the north-east territory in dispute, which embraced some 12,000 square miles, seven-twelfths, or about as much as the King of the Netherlands had awarded, were set off to the United States; Great Britain taking the residue and securing the highlands she desired which frown upon the Canadian Gibraltar, and a clear though circuitous route between Quebec and Halifax. Our government was permitted to carry timber down the St. John's River, and though becoming bound to pay Maine and Massachusetts $300,000 for the strip of territory relinquished to Great Britain, gained in return Rouse's Point, on Lake Champlain, of which an exact survey would have deprived us.† By the cruising convention clause, which

August 9.

* An admission of abstract transgression by Great Britain was drawn from Lord Ashburton in the correspondence, but this was all.

† A curious "battle of the maps" arose over this conventional line. A map found about this time in the French archives, and supposed to be marked by Franklin in 1782, was used confidentially in the United States Senate to show that our bargain was a good one; while Peel, in order to satisfy his own countrymen, produced as an offset the hidden

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the President himself bore a conspicuous part in arranging, the delicate point of "right of search" was avoided; for instead of trusting Great Britain as the police of other nations for suppressing the African slave-trade, each nation bound itself to do its full duty by keeping up a sufficient squadron on the African coast. It so happened that Great Britain, by softening the old phrase "right of search" into "right of visitation," had been inducing other nations to guarantee this police inspection of suspected slave vessels. In December, 1841, ambassadors of the five great European powers arranged in London a quintuple league of this character. But France, hesitating to confirm such an arrangement, rejected that league when the Ashburton treaty was promulgated, and hastened to negotiate in its place a cruising convention similar to ours on the slave-trade suppression;* nor was the right of search, against which America had fought in the war of 1812, ever again invoked, even as a mutual principle, until by 1862 the United States had grown as sincere as Great Britain herself in wishing to crush out the last remnant of the African traffic. This cruising convention, however, left the abstract question of search untouched, and in that light Sir Robert Peel defended himself in Parliament.†

1841. Dec.

The Ashburton treaty was honorable, on the whole, for each side; what it arranged was arranged fairly, and what it omitted was deferred without prejudice. England's pacifying course showed that her statesmen, in the last thirty years, had learned something of American character

map of Oswald, the king's geographer in 1783, in which it appeared that the new treaty gave Great Britain the advantage. See N. A. Rev., vol. lvi; 2 Curtis's Webster, chap. 29.

* "For the first time in our history," wrote Wheaton from Berlin, "could it be said that the American government had exerted an influence on the policy of Europe." 2 Tyler's Tyler, 233. But did he not overlook American example in dealing with the piracy of the Barbary States? Vol. ii, *supra*.

† See 2 Tyler, 236, 239, for an occurrence in 1858 which led the British government to renounce formally the right of visit as against the United States.

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and sensibility; she yielded enough to keep the peace, which was all she ever meant to yield; nor did she yield, now or at any other time, without gaining all she safely could in return. Americans who expect a motherly indulgence from the mother country, whose pride is forever wounded by their independence, are sure to be disappointed. This settlement, at all events, averted the war which was imminent; and in the opinion of Upshur, the rising star of Tyler's little galaxy, war with Great Britain would have overthrown the American Union and established a Southern Confederacy.* It is to Tyler's just renown that the strife of words led to no such issue; and though the laboring oar fell to Webster, his Secretary, the President buoyed up the business, when it was nearly aground, by the suave and cheerful address and happy strain of compliment which was his strong point; for, being of good lineage, he was easily a gentleman. Home-sickness, the hot weather, money straits, and his false attitude in politics, which set him more and more at variance with his party friends, drove Webster sometimes into an ungracious and difficult mood; while Lord Ashburton had his own trials to bear. Tyler smoothed out the wrinkles of negotiation, and being an exceptional Virginian in favoring navies, the African squadron proposal came from him.† So satisfactory, in fine, was the treaty, despite all criticism, that the Senate ratified it by more than a three-fourths vote,‡ and at a time, too, when the Whig Congress was strongly incensed against the administration, and Webster had made bitter enemies. Not an originator of measures so much as their consummate champion, nor occupied much of his life in the administration of affairs, the Secretary set by this settlement his chief landmark among the records, and more durable, indeed, did it prove than most of those on which his Whig

1842. Aug. 20.

* 2 Tyler, 227.

† 2 Tyler, 219.

‡ By 39 to 9. The treaty, having been ratified by Great Britain, was promulgated in November. See, for other details of this negotiation, 2 Curtis's Webster and 2 Tyler's Tyler.

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colleagues were occupied. This business, too, gave Tyler his best, and almost his only, claim to New England thankfulness, for his shifting vane pointed more and more to the South every month, as his term drew on.

Through the second and regular session of Congress, which lasted two hundred and sixty-nine days and was the longest ever held until after the Mexican war, and through the third and final session as well, we look in vain for results. The Whig majority wrangled with the President day after day, and the bright expectations with which they had set out were dimmed with gloom. Tyler showed more mettle than had been expected of him and vindicated the rights of a promoted Vice-President to the fullest. But only the feeblest remnant of followers remained in camp with him. In truth, he had no skill to organize, and fatally had he magnified his importance when he matched himself for a Presidential candidate against Clay. But he tried somewhat longer to regain his lost foothold among the Whigs. In the first place, uneasy about his Bank vetoes, nor able to stand on clear loco-foco ground after giving the sub-treasury away, he puzzled his brain to find out some new scheme of finance which would meet the public wants, save his legal scruples, and give him the glory he had coveted of originating the plan of reform. An exchequer bill was the result, which he outlined at the second session in his opening message. The completed draft was submitted by Secretary Forward, on a call of the House proposed by Cushing, of the corporal's guard, and a statement of the plan accompanied it, which was drawn though not signed by Webster.* Its three objects were the safe-keeping of the public moneys, a national currency, and cheap exchange; a board of control taking charge in Washington, with agencies which could be set up in the several States. The plan had merits, though weakened by the homage paid to State

1841. Dec. 6. 1842. Aug. 31. Dec. 5. 1843. March 3.

1841. December.

* 2 Tyler, 129, etc.

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sovereignty, that bugbear which stood in the path of all practicable plans. All of Tyler's new cabinet expressed their favor to this scheme. Spencer pronounced it the best which had ever been submitted to the public, while Webster pledged his word that if tried three years our people would admit this to be the most beneficent institution ever established, next to the constitution itself. Favorable reports were made in both Houses, each accompanied by a bill.* But Congress took now its revenge by showing to the President the same contempt for his plan that he had shown for theirs. Neither bill received much attention at the second session, though the President once more called attention to the subject, and in the third the House buried the plan under a crushing vote,† and the country never mourned. Of national banking and a national currency the Whigs breathed not a word again. The public moneys were left in the naked charge of the President, subject to his own arrangements for their custody, until the Democrats should revive their own sub-treasury. One thing, however, was settled by Tyler's vetoes: the people learned to exist without the old-fashioned, single corporation Bank, which Jackson had laid low; Webster soon pronounced its final epitaph in his speeches, and the Whigs, with Clay himself, abandoned the whole subject in their next Presidential canvass.

1843. January.

In full possession of the national legislature, the Whigs were capable of despatching an immense amount of work, but for their acrimonious strife with the Executive. They had strongly cherished the purpose of framing a new national policy. But the breach with Tyler widened instead of closing up. The President, throwing all pledges to the wind, now that his party had abandoned him, grasped his prerogative as tenaciously as ever Jackson had done, and inflicted all the mischief possible. Having re-

* Congressional Debates; 61 Niles.

† See 11 Adams's Diary, 45, 303.

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organized the cabinet against all parties, so to speak, his first aim was to create a party; to do what seemed best for the interests of the public, as Upshur privately expressed it, and trust to the moderates of all parties to sustain him.* This hope was fallacious; and fallacious all the more, because no one would take Tyler's word that his intentions were honorable. They were not so honorable but that the axe of patronage was swung in two directions pretty vigorously to promote Tyler's new party. The appointments were shared about equally between Whigs and Democrats, at the same time that Tyler avoided both Clay's and Benton's followers, and looked out to strengthen himself, most of all, against Clay.† This did not show a high sense of public duty. And after all it proved that the President drew sycophants but no supporters; the Whigs spurned his bounty; the Democrats would not go after strange gods; there was no Tyler party in Congress, nothing but the Swiss guard which Clay had pointed out for ridicule.

Changes in the tariff impended to break up the famous compromise of 1833. The first Whig estimates of the financial needs of the government had been rose-colored. Van Buren's administration left at the accession of Tyler a deficit of $11,406,000, after meeting the current expenses and providing for the treasury notes then outstanding. This deficit had been met by a loan at the extra session, which Congress, over-sanguine, limited to three years. But postponement of tariff revision, together with the Whig rupture over the Bank vetoes, operated injuriously to our national credit. State repudiation, following soon after, made the shock still greater; not Mississippi alone, but Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Michigan were all in default; and each inclined for the moment to wipe out scores with the public creditor, heedless of honor. A national loan for three years could not be easily placed while the Union kept this posture. But the Whig Congress

* 2 Tyler, 153–158. † Ib.

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allowed this outcast administration to go on embarrassing itself with the country. Not until the close of January, 1842, did the bill become a law which authorized $5,000,000 to be emitted in treasury notes for temporary relief; it was the middle of April before a second act extended the time for obtaining the three years' loan, increasing its amount by $5,000,000;* appropriation acts were held back, the exchequer plan ignored, revision still delayed on the ways and means of a revenue, Meantime, the President had twice recalled to Congress the stringency of the situation, while the Secretary of the Treasury earnestly declared that prompt action was essential to save the good faith of the government. Meantime, the House had been pestering the Executive with calls concerning his new appointments. They asked the names of all members of Congress who had been applicants for office under him, but Tyler protected what had been confidential and not official correspondence, and refused to answer.†

1842. January. April. March.

In his second message on the Treasury situation the President urged a prompt revision of the tariff, by duties increased above twenty per cent., and for the first time foreshadowed a new provocation of the Whig party by intimating that under such a revision the land distribution arranged at the extra session must fail. An effort was made in the House about the same time by the President's friends to amend the pending loan bill so as to have the public land revenue pledged expressly as security. They worked for this in vain, and the loan bill, as actually passed, pledged to the public creditor, instead, the security of the imports.‡

It was in vain that land distribution, or the yearly dividend among the States from the sale proceeds of the public territory,—that pet project of Clay's and the Whig party,—

* Acts January 31, 1842; April 15, 1842.

† Executive Docs.; 62 Niles, 30; 2 Tyler, 159; 2 Statesman's Manual.

‡ 2 Tyler, 160; Cong. Debates.

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had been carried in the extra session. This was not a time when the national government could spare a single rill of its resources. Its treasury and its credit stood at lower ebb than ever before in times of peace. This was chiefly due, however, to the strange situation of our import system. That tariff compromise of 1833, arranged by Clay and Calhoun, now about to make its last automatic change, proved a delusive contrivance, like any other self-adjusting law which is wound up to run ten years regardless of events. Its sliding scale of rates by which imports were to be dropped to a uniform twenty per cent. duty was so ill arranged that after four-tenths of the duty had come off slowly under biennial reductions, two quick strokes now cut off the rest, three-tenths by January and the remaining three-tenths by July of this year.* In fact, that uniform twenty per cent. which South Carolina hoped for as the permanent standard of the tariff never became the standard at all; for after protecting manufactures nine full years, and piling up surpluses in the treasury most of the time, this compromise gave its two free-trade turns and shut off the revenue like a spigot. In the present beggary of State and national finance and credit, at all events, our government could hardly even borrow until the law was changed.

1842. Jan. 1. July 1.

In changing the law the Whigs meant to re-establish a protective tariff; and under such a tariff, as they figured it, all current expenditures might be amply met without disturbing that land distribution at all to which the party stood pledged. Their project, which was based on Secretary Forward's estimates, and which the President himself admitted was moderate, made revenue the only object and protection the incident; the duties were partially readjusted, with the scale set between twenty-five and forty per cent.; no manufactures of cotton rated higher than thirty per cent., but woollen goods touched the maximum. Three years' proof of such a tariff gave an increase far more than enough to meet all annual wants,

1842.

* *Supra*, p. 103.

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aside from the public land sales, which yielded in these days but little more than two millions a year.* Had it not been for Tyler, then, the Whigs would have fulfilled their campaign pledges, pleased their great leader, pleased, too, the States which groaned for some relief from their indebtedness. The Democrats, of course, stood on the Jacksonian ground, which was a good one, opposing all surrender of a source of national revenue, and acting on their usual policy, of favoring the farm above the factory in tariff rates. But the majority of Congress was not theirs nor the responsibility to the people. The Whigs once more were gravelled by their own President. On this new tariff act, which all admitted needful, Tyler unexpectedly dissented from the majority, giving the benefit of his professions to the Whigs and of his action to the Democrats, as he had done on the bank question. He did so by taking advantage of the safety-valve proviso which we have seen was tacked to the land distribution bill of the extra session.† It was a cunning proviso, procured by southern free-traders, as if Calhoun meant to keep Clay tied to the old coalition or else humiliate him. Upon this stoppage of the land distribution whenever duties should be raised above twenty per cent., the President now impaled his conscience, like a beetle pierced with a pin, and kept Congress from amending its own legislation. He had praised the policy of land distribution like any Whig; he had professed no objection to a Whig tariff; but to have a Whig tariff and a Whig distribution, too, disturbed some sacred compromise.‡ The Whigs in Congress thought they divined his motive, which was to mortify Clay and please Calhoun; and Clay himself, who felt sure of it, encouraged his friends to stand firm, strip the traitor of all disguise, and drive him to the fold where he belonged.§ Six months of the session had gone by before

* See Tables Am. Almanac. † *Supra*, p. 389.

‡ 2 Tyler, 35, etc., tries to clear the President by supposing that Ewing in 1841 misled him in the estimates.

§ See 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 178–188. The rumor went that Calhoun was parleying with the President.

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the House took up tariff legislation in earnest, and moulded two bills for raising a revenue; one of them provisional, and both exceeding, of course, the twenty per cent. maximum of duties. The provisional bill, which suspended land distribution for a month only, reached the President only a few days before the first of July, the date fixed for the last ruinous cut under the old compromise act.* He returned the provisional bill to the House, with the objection that land distribution was not suspended under this act while the new duties lasted. The provisional bill failed in consequence and the angry Whigs resolved to force another veto.† The regular tariff bill retained the same land distribution purpose; it passed the House about the middle of July and the Senate early in August. The President did not hesitate, did not even ask the advice of his cabinet before accepting the challenge. He promptly vetoed the bill the third day after it came to his hands, and again the House could not muster a two-thirds vote to pass it.

June.

July 16. Aug. 5.

Aug. 9.

Anticipating this result, the Whigs had considered how to impress Tyler's apostasy upon the people. Botts was ardently bent on impeachment, and made many personal disclosures in his speeches which reflected upon the President; but his passion and the strong personal feeling attributed to him restrained the more prudent of the party. Adams led the House in approaching an indictment, and there resting. On his motion a select committee of thirteen in that branch considered the veto message; and made a stirring report, drawn up by Adams himself, which arraigned the President for strangling

August.

* See 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 188. Clay writes: "In my view of it, I think our friends ought to stand up firmly and resolutely for distribution. The more vetoes the better now, assuming that the measures themselves are right."

† Many interpreted the bill of 1833 to allow no duties at all to be levied after July 1st without some new act like the provisional one. But Attorney-General Legaré advised to the contrary, and the collectors were instructed to go on levying duties, the lowest rates of duty now going into operation.

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legislation by the misuse of the veto power. Against this unusual procedure Tyler sent in his protest, but the House voted not to receive it.* But the embarrassing question remained, whether to adjourn and leave Tyler's administration without a revenue, and on this the Whigs divided. Some, like Adams, would have adjourned at once and favored spirited action; but moderate men of the party were unwilling to go before the people on so extreme an issue; and Fillmore, the chairman of the ways and means, reported a new bill which omitted the offending distribution clause. Twice defeated, this bill at last passed the House by a very close vote, and the Senate adopted it by a majority of one; the President signed it on the day before adjournment, the same day that his protest went to the House.† As finally approved, then, the new tariff left undisturbed the safety-valve clause of the land distribution act passed the year before.‡ That valve at once closed by the force of its own mechanism, and as the duties have never since been reduced to twenty per cent., it was never lifted again. It was the last triumph of the Calhoun nullifiers. Tyler carried his point by distressing the Clay Whigs as he had done the year before, and they in utter detestation abjured him forever. Aug. 18–30.

The first years of the old compromise tariff had been blooming years for the whole Union. Clay claimed in 1843 that the compromise saved American manufactures, and gave them stability, working for seven years admirably.§ Calhoun, in 1836, owned publicly that for the three past years his State and section had felt the growing and general prosperity of the country as never before. "Our prosperity as a great agricultural people," he argued,

* This Executive protest was treated as a breach of privilege. In this the House stood on stronger ground than the Senate had occupied in 1834 against President Jackson, with the aid of Tyler's own vote; for the House had an undoubted right of inquisition upon the acts of the Executive, being the impeaching branch of Congress.

† 62, 63 Niles; Cong. Debates; 2 Tyler.

‡ Act Aug. 30, 1842.

§ Clay's Priv. Corr., 482.

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"producers of cotton, rice, and tobacco, to be consumed in general markets of the world, must depend upon a free exchange of products with the rest of the world;" yet he gloried in that same compromise by which the South had regained her welfare.* How little in reality the protecting duties of 1832 had been scaled down in those three years has already been shown; but, blind to the deeper causes which stunted her progeny, the sunny section hatched her eggs in the sand. How amazingly was the great staple increasing! a cotton crop heavier by pound weight in 1835 than the whole free population of New York and Pennsylvania, and still steadily increasing; a crop whose export to Great Britain alone, nearly tripling in twelve years, stood in that year at 252,000,000 pounds. In vain had England, by way of competition, been trying to introduce cotton culture into the East Indies. Was it strange, then, that the cotton barons grew arrogant, ambitious to spread their system, or that they disdained northern sentiment over the negro? Slaves and the staple they thought indissoluble; and, indeed, they were fast coming to believe that the present Union was burdensome; that with an independent confederacy of their own they could make the world their own market. Such were the thoughts springing up in ardent minds which bent to Calhoun's whispers. Millions of acres were covered by the white bursting pod; millions more might be wrested from the nerveless powers about them, and slavery set like the stars in the firmament.

1835.

In the States they disdained to pattern after, at the North,—free, thank Heaven! from their own leprosy,—pursuits varied greatly, though rapid growth was the law of them all. Commerce familiarized New England and the middle seaboard with all parts of the world. We were second only to Great Britain among civilized nations in the proportion of sailors to the population; and the quick and frequent trips of American packets and lighter craft saved in time what other nations might economize in wages.

* 51 Niles, 781.

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American sea-captains employed the sailors of all nations, and knew how to get the best work out of the smallest number; the cod and coast fisheries constituted an important industry, while the New Bedford whaler, the profits of whose ventures were divided like prize-money between owners and crew, scoured the far Pacific, returning with a full cargo of oil often without having once landed since the vessel left the heel of the Bay State. Ship-building was an art in which Americans excelled, for they were universally known to build the fastest vessels in the world, designing new models while other nations clung to the old ideas.* But to northern manufactures it is that our thought should turn. A cohort of industries kept good pace with the extension of commerce. Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, and compact New Jersey were at this period the chief manufacturing States of the Union, but the spirit of their enterprise was as boundless as that of freedom itself. Our native manufactures and commerce aided to build up one another; time would give us the near approach to all nations; and no longer confined to the cramping bounds of a home market, American goods found their way to South America, the East and West Indies, and the Celestial Empire. We were a world by ourselves, a people capable of supplying all the average wants of their own society. In Europe, labor was cheaper, and skill sharpened down to the point of minute perfection; but to this a population highly ingenious made a fair offset, while our market was open for the millions and not the millionaire. In water-power we were unrivalled; our coal and iron resources, rapidly developing, would soon increase our independence of the mother country; taxes were lower than in England, living cheaper, and raw materials such as cotton, hemp, hides, and lumber obtained at less cost. There was something truly marvellous in the mineral fertility of the great State of Pennsylvania alone; her capacious bosom nurtured each new material want in turn, and more than a Peruvian treasure

* See Grund's United States.

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was yielded from her anthracite mines alone, which replaced the ravage of the forests so rapidly in ten years after the pickaxe was first applied, that by 1831 it was the cheap fuel at the New York wharves and successfully fed, besides, the motive-power of many factories and a host of busy steamboats. Without that timely discovery, how inferior would have been the development of steam-propelling industries which consumed fuel so voraciously! Though American coal and iron still cost more, perhaps, than in England, the vicinity of these products to one another on native soil was like a giant footprint. The grimy bituminous smoke overhung the furnaces of Pittsburg more densely after this tariff of 1842, and railway iron and supplies enriched the Quaker State. In the cheap wares Americans had long driven a busy trade; in paper and hardware, glassware, painted chairs and furniture, the shoes of Lynn, and the wooden clocks of peddling Connecticut, who taught the world how trade should be brought to the customer's door.* But the woollen and cotton manufactures, old enough to have learned to creep, were an object of great, and, perhaps, the greatest, solicitude under our Whig tariff. Wool had been the chief target of the nullifiers ever since New England stood behind it; and woollen and cotton industries outside of New England maintained but a struggling existence. Great Britain was the best customer of the cotton States; and until the iron and steel of Pennsylvania diverted her jealousy, nothing so galled British pride as the rivalry Massachusetts set up in weaving fabrics of cotton and wool. Nor was the South pleased to enrich the chief synagogue of abolition. Pioneer manufacturers, with their enterprise and capital, the Lowells, Lawrences, and Appletons, of Massachusetts, built great factory towns, of which Lowell, at the junction of the Concord and Merrimack rivers, was the earliest and most famous. Its fine water-power was aided by a canal through which goods were transported to Boston until

* The story ran that the wooden nutmegs of this State were only surpassed by those "made of the real sassafras."

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the railway superseded it. Here the first mill was erected in 1822, and fourteen years later there were twenty-seven of them, employing nearly 130,000 spindles, and occupying the full water privileges. Lowell spindles revolved faster than the British, and various improvements originating here had already been introduced abroad. Thread, for which $2.40 a pound was paid when Hancock was governor of Massachusetts, was used in the "log-cabin" patchwork at only sixteen cents, and the old veteran of 1812 could buy the cotton fabric for his shirts for less than half of what the bare weaving by hand cost when he shouldered his musket for the march to Canada. Besides the cotton stuffs which ran out more than 20,000 miles a year, were carpets and cloths, using more than 500,000 pounds of wool a year. The Bigelow carpet loom was a triumph of native invention. Lowell was a model town of American pattern. At this time the work of the mills was chiefly done by young women, most of them the daughters of New England farmers; and as anti-slavery associations first taught American women to agitate public questions, so in the Lowell factory was made their first industrial stand as a body in pursuits which took the sex out of the secluded home life which tradition taught was their sphere. Their morals in these mills were thus far exemplary, and woman's vigilance was enough to expel the impure and guard the gates of chastity. They were clean, healthy, well dressed, and attractive. Educated, most of them, in the rudiments of learning, and having a bright intelligence, these factory girls maintained a magazine among them with original verses and essays. Their procession, to which we have alluded,* when a mile of factory girls marched with great pomp, bareheaded, dressed in white, with sashes of various hues, and holding their pretty parasols above their heads, was the most unique welcome given to Jackson during his famous tour. On their modest earnings of $3 or $3.50 a week, from which they put something by, they lived under strict restraint

1822–36.

* *Supra*, p. 118; 44 Niles, and local newspapers.

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as in some huge female seminary, outnumbering the masculine workers by nearly four to one, not less than twelve hundred of them being employed by a single corporation. These angel operatives were the delight of Massachusetts, the despair of cankered mill towns in the old world. Such was the American factory system, in its fresh novelty, when the best mercantile honor directed it, and the tender sex still felt that life had great risks when it detached her from the family hearth and sent her into the wide world to earn a living.*

Bitter grew the feud between President Tyler and Congress as these two years rolled on to their end. Neither side would yield to the other. Non-committal as had been the Whig canvass of 1840, no party had ever fixed upon a clearer course of policy when once it came into power, no majority in Congress ever promised better harmony with the President chosen by the people, and with his cabinet, in carrying it out. But one black hour changed the whole face of affairs; and the Whig policy was stranded, the whole fleet tempest-tossed, Congress frustrated; and, bitterest of vexation, by that very same Jacksonian method of overriding the legislative will which Tyler not less than Harrison, all Whig speakers for Whig candidates, had loudly repudiated. The fruits of victory crumbled like the Dead-Sea apple at the touch. The National Bank bill fell speared by vetoes, and all effort to repair the currency was paralyzed. Vetoes killed the land distribution, lineal heir of internal improvements, and the last of that munificent race of projects for the benefit of the States. The bankrupt act, not in the full sense a Whig measure, was repealed by the same Congress which brought it into being. The repeal of the independent treasury, so far from effecting its intended purpose, practically reunited the purse and sword. Of all Clay's well-arranged programme at the extra session nothing Whig survived this Whig Con-

1842. Dec. 5– 1843. March 3.

* 44, 51 Niles; 2 Arfwedson.

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gress but the new tariff; the rest of the work was wasted energy.

Before the strife of the second session on this tariff question, Clay had left the scenes of legislation thrice mortified, and more, at the failure of the plans he most cherished. Another reason for retiring was connected with his ambition. He felt, as did his intimates, that he could better marshal the Whig host to victory by leaving the angry arena at once. He had thought of resigning when Harrison came into office; he needed rest, and the idea grew upon him that he was an obstacle in Congress while he remained there.* The last day of March saw an impressive scene in the Senate chamber, such as only a Henry Clay could have sustained. But Clay's wizard spell was felt even by the associates who had opposed him most, and all knew he had been basely treated. The hall, the galleries, and every approach to this wing were crowded to hear his eloquence for the last time. In thrilling words the orator reviewed his long public career of nearly forty years, most of which had been identified with Congressional service; he scorned the late imputation of his enemies that he had tried to be "dictator," though he would confess that his nature was warm, his temper ardent, and his disposition one which tended to enthusiasm. On this parting occasion he tenderly besought his colleagues to forget all personal collisions between them, and think only of the conflicts of mind and mind, in which each one had meant to subserve the greatest happiness of the country. At the close of this speech Clay submitted the credentials of Crittenden, the late Attorney-General, as his successor, and invoked God's blessing upon those with whom he now intended to part forever. This generous and well-framed speech, which was marred by no severe allusion to the wounds he felt the deepest, touched the hearts of all who listened to it; strong men, strong foes like Benton, wept, and when the Speaker closed, the

1842. March.

* Clay's Priv. Corr., 452–456.

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Senate adjourned, on Preston's motion, too deeply affected to go on with the business. They who before had passed hot words with Henry Clay now went up to him, released from restraint, and vied in tender words with his personal followers; and as he reached the entrance door to pass out, Calhoun, his latest antagonist, who for five years had not spoken with him, met him on the threshold with extended hands, and both by some hidden prompting fell into each other's arms without a word.

What years had passed over these foremost illustrious rivals since first they met in the House young zealots, and spurred the country together into the war of 1812 for "sailors' rights"! Time admonished each that his eagle ambition must soon drop its pinions. Clay's retirement left Calhoun without a foeman worthy of his steel; and wearying of the aimless strife, he, too, punctuated this Congress as his last, notifying his State, which was still devoted to him, that he must decline to be re-elected. Neither for Clay nor Calhoun was this the last exit of senatorial life, though such they honestly believed it; but when they met there again ambition once flushed was worn to a ghost. Another retirement from this Congress, announced more modestly than either of these, was that of Fillmore, in the House, the Whig who had changed the tariff bill at the last moment to propitiate the errant Executive. Fillmore was a man of fine presence, not brilliant in debate, but possessed of fair ability, sober, and industrious. Who can turn the next leaf of the sibyl's book? This, this alone, was he whose present farewell to Congress meant in good truth the all hail, hereafter,—the next President of the United States to be generated by the same process as John Tyler, and the last of Presidents belonging to the great Whig party.*

1841-43. State debts continued a source of great anxiety at this period, dishonoring this Union in the eyes of Europe. These debts had been chiefly contracted

* See 62 Niles; 2 Benton, 398.

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during the wild era which ended in the crisis of 1837 and while the passion for constructing great public works of utility was strongest. They were owed largely to European creditors, who wished to hold the national government in some way responsible for them; the interest having been defaulted by the debtor States, as we have seen in various instances, and no provision made for meeting the principal. The black cloud of repudiation darkened the picture. Repudiation was first proposed, first adopted, by Mississippi in 1841, and the policy proved a lasting millstone to her credit, other States hesitating to follow the pernicious example. Mississippi troubles grew, however, out of a banking entanglement, and there was some taint of fraud in the issue of her bonds. Of the other delinquent States,—Pennsylvania, Maryland, Louisiana, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan,—nearly all had loaned their credit, recklessly perhaps, but magnificently, to works of real utility, like railroads, canals, and bridges, each with its pot of golden profits under the rainbow's span. Pennsylvania had owed nearly $38,000,000 in her funded debt, the chief of which was due for a vertebrate track and water-course extending from Philadelphia to Pittsburg, and Maryland was similarly involved, though her Baltimore and Ohio railroad made fair returns upon the investment. In New York the legislature had recently put a stop to the enlargement of the Erie canal and other works of improvement, but the honor of the State was zealously maintained; while New York metropolis that same year not only prosecuted to completion its costly Croton aqueduct, but kept the sources of public credit pure as the fountains which at last gushed forth to gladden its great multitude.*

1841.

1843. January.

1842.

Punctilious honor in dealing with the public creditors had been the national motto, the national example, ever since Hamilton smote the rock with his rod; and in these depressing days that other Hamiltonian plan was agitated, of having the nation assume the State debts, but

* 63 Niles; N. A. Review, January, 1844; Seward's Life, 610.

public opinion would not assent. The land distribution scheme, now frustrated, was, we have seen, a gentle reach in that direction, while a British interest worked, though in vain, to bring State obligations by some means into the scope of the Ashburton treaty. The American people grew sensitive as they found the American name held in disrepute abroad, because of the few States which deliberated whether to repudiate; and as a rebuke to the repudiating member, a petition found its way into the House which urged Congress to assume the debt of Mississippi, and eject that State from the Union. Adams* took the high ground that the Union could compel any delinquent State to pay what it owed, though on that point the President and a vast majority of both Houses differed from him; he warned his countrymen, moreover, that foreign powers would hold this federal government liable for the debts of all its sovereign members. Such promptings, fortunately, had their weight with Pennsylvania, which hovered for a time on the fatal brink of dishonor. Sydney Smith, an English liberal, well esteemed in America, had bought Pennsylvania bonds when they seemed a safe investment; he dipped his pen in gall when he found them defaulted, and made Americans writhe under his satire; and selling out when the bonds were quoted at forty per cent. of their face, he retired from American securities in a dudgeon, dying soon after. By this time Pennsylvania was fairly shamed from the path of dishonor. Prosperity returning to bless her abundant resources, she resumed the payment of her debts by a unanimous vote of the legislature, and set a salutary example to other hesitating States, which was none too early. This Union emerged bravely from that slough of discredit and despondency which in the Spanish-American republics about us was breeding the worst ills of European intervention.

1840–43.

1845.

Charles Dickens, in his title-page of "American Notes," satirized while the slime was fresh the bad odor of Ameri-

* 11 J. Q. Adams's Diary, 112, 288.

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can securities in these years, and thought of adding an Old Bailey motto more stinging still, which, however, he concluded to suppress. He was another of those English literati whose experience of the United States left him in a soured frame of mind; but more popular and influential here by far than Sydney Smith, his barb drove far deeper. Seldom was it, in his long career, that this Hogarth of English literature, though travelling much, painted other scenes in his novels than those of the English common life to which his heart always warmed; and it was the warmth of his coloring, his pathos, his melodramatic art, almost grotesque, that gave the peculiar richness to his exuberant humor. He was no judicious critic of that to which he was external, but a caricaturist and word-painter, looking out for picturesque contrasts. In 1842, Dickens visited America, whither his fame had preceded him. The famous novelist of the poor and lowly was greeted with superabundant applause. Crowds gathered to gaze on him; he was cheered at the theatre whenever he appeared, honored with dinners and balls, waited upon by deputations from distant towns at the West who begged the honor of a visit. It was at a dinner given him in New York, where he was toasted as "the guest of the nation," that Washington Irving, a nervous presiding officer, unused to oratory, broke down in his speech with his manuscript at his plate; Irving, honored in diplomacy, who had often roamed with Dickens the London streets, but was home now to arrange for his mateless nest on the Hudson. So eager and spontaneous was his welcome to America that Dickens in his vanity expected too much from the mission which he had in view. That mission was to procure some law of international copyright; and Bulwer, Carlyle, Campbell, Tennyson, Hallam, were among the British authors who seconded his efforts as the most popular of them all; but American publishing interests were hostile to the plan, and American authors, as a class,—Irving, Prescott, and Bryant,—shy of meddling.* These were

1842.

* See 1 Dickens's Life, by Forster.

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times when the business of cheap American reprints in this country was carried to an excess most unusual, and newspapers and broadsides served up British literature by the column in fine print and dingy paper. This compelled the chief publishing houses to ransack their dusty plates and reissue old books in a cheap form. With Shakespeares, family libraries, dictionaries, novels, and miscellanies, a huge mass of pirated matter, the market was soon overstocked; but the popular taste for good literature was expanded. International copyright is just to authors, yet the international fame of a book brings reward to a writer, and better is a foreign circulation without profit than no foreign circulation at all.

1842. Where Dickens thrust the sting of his satire most deeply was in the comment of his "American Notes" upon our slave institution. Taking personally but a slight peep at southern life, he culled from the rude frontier newspapers the coarsest paragraphs he could find of brutal murders and bar-room frays with pistols and bowie-knives in the far-off border States. No border life is without its ruffian aspect, but in all this he seemed to see the barbarism of slavery. Not to the slave alone, but to his oppressor, the system, he declared, was fraught with dangers as sure to come as the day of judgment.*

Such were the reflections which southern men constantly invited at this period while they hugged closer a system which the whole civilized world was enlisting to destroy. What moderate slaveholders claimed was constantly that the institution, much as they regretted it, had existed before them, that emancipation would compel a civil war of races, that only the slave States were affected by slavery, and that no other part of the Union had a right to meddle.† Love of Union was the chord which, like the touch of Orpheus, should put all fiercer passions to sleep. But how long would be the charm of that fairy-like music? Hear

* Dickens's American Notes.

† See Clay's Priv. Corr., 463–476.

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the harsh trumpet of abolitionism pealing its dissonant alarm, and the whole South drawing together by a common instinct and knotting their lash the harder. It was plain, could one have read the signs of the times, that slaveholders were at length banded more closely to their system than to the Union itself, and that a race of masters was growing up who could not bear a superior nor brook an equal. The wish, the need, to be let alone led logically to the resolve to live alone, to seek new and independent safeguards, should other guarantees fail. Southerners were growing very sensitive to dictation, and the northern abolition movement only made their pride the more wilful to keep and defend an institution which many of them, indeed, believed essential to their economic condition, and at all events never to part with it but in their own way. Many slaveholders, and the cotton growers in particular, had, moreover, the propagating ardor. As for abolitionists at the north, they were hated as hell-hounds; Clay, than whom no one of them all tried harder to please northern sentiment, could see no good, but harm, in the abolition movement, which arrayed State against State and invited blood, incendiarism, and devastation.*

Time should deal very gently with the loyal conservatism, north and south, which deprecated all agitation on this tender subject. Had Harrison lived, northern Whigs might have steered the ship judiciously. But under Tyler, whose whole soul was southern, it was not long before the national craft was plunging in dangerous waters. The inevitable tendency of this administration from beginning to end was to hasten the impending conflict between freedom and slavery. Such was the bias of the Virginia conclave which gained gradual ascendancy with the President. Northern Democrats were debauched in consequence, while northern Whigs grew timid and pliable, except for the anti-slavery minority of them. Early in the extra session of this Congress John Quincy Adams moved to rescind the rule against anti-slavery petitions; his point

* Clay's Priv. Corr., 461.

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was carried after a warm debate, only to be reconsidered and lost soon after, the southern Whigs voting with the Democrats. A new effort he made at the long session, but was again defeated. He next called a caucus of the Whigs for concert on this question; but only a handful responded, Winthrop, Fillmore, and other professed friends of the repeal staying away.* Northern Whigs, in truth, were shy of Adams, lest they should become identified with the abolition fanatics; they liked the grand old veteran for a prow, but as a prow to move by their impulse. Webster was New England's Jove; a nod from the beetle-browed divinity was a command; and Webster foiled silently this maker of turbulence. The Speaker of the House, in recognition of pre-eminent merit, had made Adams chairman of the foreign relations; but the old man's interest centred in the right of petition. Petitions and remonstrances being presented by him as they came, he showed his consistency when it was put to test. One petition from Georgia, which he offered at the second session, prayed that he might be removed from the chairmanship assigned to him; and another, a few days afterwards, from Haverhill, of his State, which bore forty-six signatures, asked that measures be taken for a peaceable dissolution of the Union. Upon this latter memorial the southern members tried to silence the aged champion, as they had tried before, by impaling him before the country as a traitor; Gilmer, the President's friend, offered a resolution of censure which, after a caucus of the slaveholding members, was displaced by one more flaming and violent in expression, which that squanderer of brilliant gifts, the dissipated Tom Marshall, of Kentucky, introduced. Adams defended his ground in the long and exasperating debate which followed, though the mental pressure upon him was so great that for several nights he scarcely slept. The House at last laid the whole subject of censure on the table, and then by a vote of four to one refused to receive the Haverhill

1841. May–June.

1842. Jan.

Feb. 7.

* 11 Adams's Memoirs; Cong. Debates.

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petition.* As part of the attempt to crush the ex-President his southern colleagues in the committee of foreign relations tried to have Cushing forced into his place as chairman, and unable to carry their point they resigned, refusing to serve with him; their places were filled. Adams's constituents applauded his course, and when he returned home in midsummer, and a year later, upon his tour of the Niagara region and western New York, he was hailed with enthusiasm as the champion of petition.† 1843.

This huge leviathan of slavery, like the whale island of the fairy story, was at length in perceptible motion. The same impatient and domineering temper which southern masters displayed to northern debaters they showed in collisions with one another. The bank-miscarriage veto messages stirred up bad blood among the southern Whigs; their fiery words lashed one another like scorpions; southern members were seen tussling on the floor of the House, while personal friends tried to separate them, and the doorkeeper rushed to close doors and win- 1841.

* 11 Adams's Memoirs; Cong. Debates. The vote was 106 to 93 for laying the censure on the table; 166 to 40 against receiving the Haverhill petition.

† It was in this exciting debate of 1842 that Adams made that startling announcement to which allusion has already been made. *Supra*, p. 227. Should war or insurrection ever arise at the South, slaves, so he claimed, might be lawfully emancipated by virtue of martial law and the war powers vested in the national Executive. 11 J. Q. Adams, 103. The case he had mainly in view was that of some servile uprising which would require the intervention of the government and involve the free States of the Union. This incensed Tyler's slaveholding friends. "Depend upon it," wrote Upshur, "these anti-slavery societies do not mean to give up the game, and we shall sooner or later have to take the ground which we ought to have taken long ago,—that these people must leave us to manage our own affairs in our own way, or else that we shall assert that right in the mode which seems to us best." 2 Tyler's Tyler, 198. This, it is well known, was the open joint in the constitutional armor through which President Lincoln, in 1863, pierced slavery and gave the system its death-wound.

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dows against the disgraceful exhibition.* Other similar scenes of the kind which followed, such as had not occurred for many years, our press was shy of describing. Southerners had their own gift of keeping their noisy ones in countenance like the cooler heads of a drinking party. Northerners usually looked on in silence; for while fellow-members from the other section were outspoken and self-important, these had the air rather of diffidence and apology. Adams had scanned the chamber anxiously, straining to discover one fellow-Whig of the North who would stand up and speak for free principles like a man, who would take part of the load which his tottering frame could bear but little longer. There seemed a social miasma fatal to courageous opposition in this Washington atmosphere.

1842. He saw one at last, his kindred soul, in a young Whig, Joshua R. Giddings, who had lately taken his seat from the western reserve district of Ohio, a region where anti-slavery sentiment grew green, as in an oasis. Giddings, a man of broad shoulders and muscular frame, with plain, homespun manners, lowly born, the son of a pioneer farmer and self-educated, might have seemed the antipodes of that illustrious scholar whose public honors came by birthright. But they were alike in boldness of utterance and singleness of purpose in the slavery

1841-43. debates. In the present House, Giddings supported the sage of Quincy on the repeal of the gag rule, having now a recognized position as chairman

1842. of the claims committee. And in the long session, three weeks after Adams's tribulation with the disunion petition from Haverhill, he presented an Ohio petition of similar purport. But the House refused to receive it, with a decided hint that the lenity shown to old age and pre-eminent station would not be measured out to

March 21-22. him. Giddings was not to be suppressed so easily, and he soon after offered a series of resolutions suggested by the "Creole" case, which reflected severely upon our coasting trade in slaves. More than once

* 61 Niles.

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had this Joshua been threatened with violence while on the floor by bullies of the baser sort in the southern delegations, their faces convulsed with passion; one of them tried to push him out of the aisle and force a quarrel upon him; but their friends of better breeding removed them, and southern self-respect prescribed the penalty. Giddings, after much turbulence, withdrew his resolutions, which were at least offensive and ill-timed while the Ashburton mission was pending. Weller, of Giddings's own State, vied with Botts, of Virginia, in offering a vote of censure. A wrangle over the rules next arising as to whether or not the previous question should be waived so that the culprit might be heard in his defence, Giddings cut short the discussion by refusing to speak, and the resolution censuring him passed by a large vote. Giddings at once shook hands with his personal friends, left the hall, wrote a letter of formal resignation, and returned to Ohio. The hot haste of his enemies turned quickly to his favor; and at a special election held in his district a few weeks afterwards he was sent back to the House April. with a majority behind him of more than three thousand votes,* and the advance rank of anti-slavery reform never again were in want of a leader to plead for them in Congress when the sage's strength was spent.

It was high time to dissipate that pleasing spectral illusion that slavery was merely local in its influence, and concerned no State outside the southern galaxy. As a social principle, in fact, slavery was as contagious as freedom, and possessed the same power of expansion. Already had this institution brought our federal government into direct collision with Great Britain and the other European countries which had enlisted in the moral crusade; it struggled to preoccupy the virgin soil of national territory in place of freedom; it contended for the balance of national power; and the oldest and weightiest States of the Union were at this moment in serious controversy over the obli-

* See 11 Adams's Diary; Buell's Giddings.

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gation which freedom owed to rivet the chains of bondage. This last phase of the conflict deserves here a passing notice. Slaveholders claimed the right to retake such of their runaways as might have escaped into a free State; but did this compel free States to play the hound for the master, or to deprive free colored men of their liberty in a free jurisdiction, or to send their own white citizens to slave soil to suffer the vengeance of certain death, whose worst offence, even had they committed any, was to help a poor fellow-creature to become his own master, as God gave him the natural right? It was impossible that North and South in this era should harmonize on these points or even discuss them dispassionately; and what should impress posterity is, that slavery asked more of the Union, far more, than to be left alone, to use its own municipal authority to sustain its abhorred system. In these very years Governor Seward, of New York, was still in correspondence with southern State executives over the surrender of white citizens of the North as fugitives from justice on the charge of stealing slaves; Georgia coupled a like requisition of her own to that from Virginia, which the Empire State refused to grant; and Virginia and South Carolina then combined to pass local laws, by way of retaliation, which exposed all New York vessels arriving in their ports to the ignominy of search and the imprisonment of colored seamen.* On the surrender, too, of fugitive slaves there was angry collision between free and slave States. Irritated by these summary arrests, which made humanity blush, New York granted a jury trial on such issues of fact. Massachusetts went farther and forbade the use of her sheriffs or her jails for hunting down such prey;† in Pennsylvania there

1841-43.

* 61 Niles; Seward's Life, 544, 660. *Supra*, p. 343. New York merchants were acute enough to evade these search laws by clearing from Jersey City and returning thither.

† Great excitement was caused in Boston because of the arrest of a negro, Latimer, who was claimed as the property of a Virginian residing in Norfolk. By the process of *habeas corpus*, and in every other way possible, the slaveholder was resisted, and at last he was forced to

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was an act passed as early as 1826 which threatened to punish as a kidnapper any one who should forcibly carry off a free negro to make a slave of him. The original spirit of this Pennsylvania law was not defiant to slavery like the personal liberty law lately passed in Massachusetts; but Pennsylvania was adjacent to slave soil, and slave-owners had grown sensitive to the escapes of their runaway chattels. A prosecution which had been carried from Pennsylvania to the Supreme Court of the United States made a test of this kidnapping act.* It was the first time that the fugitive slave clause of our federal constitution, with the act of Congress† which was quietly passed pursuant to it during Washington's first term of office, ever came before that tribunal. The decision was rendered in 1842, the year of Latimer's arrest in Massachusetts. It sustained the slaveholder's independence of all State extradition laws whatsoever which might hinder or obstruct him from seizing and recapturing his runaway bondsman. Seven judges, all differing from one another in the reasoning process, reached this same conclusion. Free States, however, chose still to disobey, or rather to doubt how far the principle of the decision extended beyond the peculiar case and statute in controversy, and the odium of inviting such precedents made their people safely defiant. There was monstrous injustice in depriving one of liberty, even a negro resident, without due process of law. And then this fundamental difference prevailed between the slave States and the free in such controversies: that in the former jurisdiction negro complexion raised under local law a presumption of slavery, but in the latter a presumption of freedom.‡

1842.

sell the man's freedom and went home very angry. 63 Niles; local newspapers.

* Prigg *v.* Pennsylvania, 16 Pet. 539.

† Act February 12, 1793.

‡ Massachusetts kept up a personal liberty act in its code, making it more obnoxious to the federal law as time went on; and the local anti-slavery sentiment forbade its repeal. About 1845 there were border troubles between Ohio and Virginia. In the former State a law

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Section II.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-EIGHTH CONGRESS.

March 11, 1843—March 3, 1845.

The single-term theory of the Presidential office did not originate, as many have supposed, with the Democracy. It was a Whig theory, and the theory above all others, if not the only one, to which Harrison in his great campaign committed himself; the theory which Tyler, too, indorsed with a glittering and specious warmth of sentiment.* By this early commitment the Whig hero meant to strengthen his protest against Jacksonian tendencies to autocratic dominion; but more than that he meant to assuage the secret bitterness of party leaders outranking him in point of public service who were loyally fighting his battle. Before the Whigs came into power, every President, of whatever politics, had stood for his second term, and under him, necessarily, the party failed or maintained its ground. This appeal to the people midway in one's eight years' service, for approval or disapproval, Jefferson

1843.

was passed to prevent kidnapping. In the latter a grand jury, by way of resentment, indicted citizens of Ohio for aiding slaves to escape. More than ten years earlier, Abdy, the English traveller, observed that many runaway slaves, probably not less than three hundred a year, were accustomed to pass through Cincinnati on their way to Canada, and that the negro propensity to flee from Kentucky was so well known that few planters in the far southwest would buy slaves that came from that State. From this point of view, we may add, that the Ohio River became the Jordan, in later years, to the negro fugitive, while the "underground railway" which traversed the free States to the Canadian border became a current phrase to denote that secret evasion of the act of Congress which was practised systematically by the negro philanthropists of Ohio and New York.

* Tyler publicly praised Harrison in 1840 for being committed to "that greatest of all reforms, without which the effort at reform is hopeless,—limiting the Presidential office to a single term." 59 Niles, 211. This was an extravagant and, as events proved, an insincere utterance.

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had highly commended in practice. But the Democrats presently borrowed this Whig lightning for their own purpose, and adopted the one-term maxim, in real effect, as a sort of corollary to the spoils maxim of rotation in office, and because, in truth, after Jackson's death, no one led them conspicuous above all others.

There is very little, in plain truth, to commend such a maxim apart from the special circumstances to which it may apply. Popular experience still favors a second term where good purposes are to be carried to a fuller fruition and the Executive who returns to the polls is trusted. The critic of our constitution on this point can only regret that the written law fixes no limit, but trusts to precedent alone and the common jealousy, that the second term shall be the last. As for Tyler's eager prevarication on this point we may treat it lightly, for an expectant estate differs from a reversion; but his grave blunder was in not better apprehending that true policy, if not honor, dictated that he should follow closely on the lines his dead leader had marked and forego ambitious aspirations which there was not one chance in a hundred for gratifying. First in striking out to be re-elected, next in assuming a co-ordinate power to legislate against the will of Congress, Tyler defiled Harrison's sepulchre, and after committing himself to Whig ideas, acted like the stubbornest of Jacksonians. Jackson himself had not vetoed party measures without a keen regard to good policy and the party welfare. No one who knew John Tyler believed that his course was ruled by a sensitive conscience, no one took his written reasons for the true and only ones. His temper was fanned into a flame, his vanity dazzled, his good-nature abused by the clique about him until the giant-killer fancied himself growing into a giant himself. To kill Clay and be elected for another term was the gravitating law of this whole unprincipled administration.

For the first time in American history a President deserted the party which elected him, and after failing signally to recruit a party of his own marched over to the enemy. Consequently, to "Tylerize" has been a word of

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reproach in our politics ever since. His excuse was that the Whigs would not support his measures; but his duty was to support theirs, and the more so, since accident gave him an authority to which they never meant to exalt him. The Whigs soon saw the ghost he was pursuing. Unseduced by the patronage he could offer, they rallied round Clay as though to atone for their former neglect, and the Whig press throughout the Union ran up the Clay flag when the peerless senator retired from Congress.

1842. Mass-meetings pledged to this private citizen the support of the people. State conventions one after another—those of North Carolina, Georgia, Maine, and Delaware among the earliest—proclaimed Harry Clay for President, first, last, and always. While this hearty movement was in progress, the President, to counteract it, interfered with his Secretary of the Treasury, and removed a Philadelphia collector of his own choice, because the latter demurred at becoming the headsman for a peremptory list of removals. There and elsewhere John Tyler occupied himself in weeding out Clay men wherever he could find them, and filling their places with politicians attached to his personal interest.* He removed Whig postmasters and took away public advertisements from Whig newspapers on the same policy of distinction. But with all his mercenaries no influential followers could he find anywhere; and in the third session of the Congress which had just expired none but the corporal's

1843. guard stood up for him: in the House six members precisely, with Wise at the head, and Rives alone in the Senate.† He struggled to reward as well as he might the fidelity of these friends, but his struggle was difficult. Three times on the last day of the term was Wise nominated by the Executive as Minister to France, and three times was he rejected; and Forward having resigned in

March 3. loathing from the Treasury, Caleb Cushing was thrice nominated and rejected for his place, after which

* 63 Niles; newspapers of the day.

† Wise's Decades; Congressional Debates.

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the President proposed transferring John C. Spencer to that position, who was confirmed by a majority of one.* Even Democrats who applauded Tyler for the mischief he did took care not to be debauched by his favors. As an instance of the President's unpopularity an influenza which about this time broke out acquired the name of the "Tyler grippe."† An effort to impeach him failed, but he was pilloried by Congress contemptuously and deserted by the people.

The Clay canvass went swimmingly through the summer of 1842. His friends in Congress gave the retiring senator a public dinner before he left the capital, and at Lexington, Kentucky, a grand barbecue was attended in June by twenty thousand people, who assembled to honor the "farmer of Ashland." Clay's speech on this latter occasion gave the key-note to his followers. At a Harrisburg Whig convention General Scott was named once more for the next candidate, but the gallant Harry was so plainly the national favorite that Scott made a point of yielding gracefully in his favor.‡ But the first great task was to knit the Whigs against the vicious power and patronage of the false administration and nerve them to self-sacrifice. Ohio this year chose Shannon over Corwin for governor, and this Democratic triumph Clay's friends took sorely to heart. Spencer and Webster, of the cabinet, promoted party distraction in their respective States by a defence of the President, surly in temper, and at the price, as they must have felt, of continuance in his favor; both keeping aloof from the Whig State conventions, whose tone was decidedly against them. Spencer's effort took the shape of an open letter; Webster's con-

1842.

June.

July.

October.

Sept.-Nov.

* Cong. Globe; 63 Niles's Register; 2 Benton, 627. The President attended at the Senate antechamber, as usual, on the last night of the session, and nominations and rejections went back and forth like a game of shuttlecock.

† It was called, from the French, a "grippe."

‡ 62 Niles, 357; 1 Coleman's Crittenden.

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sisted in a speech he made at Faneuil Hall. These efforts were disastrous to their party. New York went Democratic, choosing Bouck for governor by twenty-one thousand majority, Seward having declined to be renominated; and the new Whig dynasty lost its control of the State for some years, Weed and Greeley carrying on their opposition journals, while the young statesman of anti-slavery tendencies returned to his law practice and invested his ambition in the coming future.* The Massachusetts dissension brought Morton, the Democrat, into State office a second time, John Davis, the Whig incumbent, failing of re-election. In Virginia the Whigs were reduced to a desperate faction. High and low, far and wide, through the Union, Whigs felt the prostrating force of Tyler's treachery, and the Whig majority of the House which came in with President Harrison was buried under a Democratic majority of more than seventy.† All this, however, was a mid-term calamity, and Clay, whose heart was strong, kept up the courage of his party for the approaching tug of 1844, which would bring the decisive result of victory or defeat.

Webster's course at this discouraging crisis showed the yawning depth of his sulking ambition, which, like the vulture of Prometheus, consumed the better part of him. Pride kept his motives in reserve, while his irresolute purpose bent him still to the tyranny of his Virginian rulers. He had gone far in this libertine business. He had staked his fondest hopes upon this alliance with the Virginian, which, by excluding Clay, might leave him foremost for the succession. But Clay's policy of open fire upon Tyler was more popular than any alliance. While Lord Ashburton negotiated, Webster might well remain in the cabinet, and Clay excused him, but he stayed after the treaty was ratified, and the Whigs blamed him for it. His Faneuil Hall speech was made in no placid mood; September. for the Whig convention of Massachusetts pronounced for Clay, and that, too, against Webster's written

* Lives of Seward and Weed.
† Whig Almanac; 2 Tyler's Tyler.

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advice.* It had resolved for a full and final severance from the President. This meant, that in order to maintain his party standing and keep his own State loyal, he must either leave this Delilah at once or give good reasons for not doing so. But Webster evaded an explanation; whether he would leave or why he would stay he refused to disclose; and with slurs at his more favored rival he declared that he could not be coaxed or driven. "What will you do with me?" he haughtily asked, and he defied brother Whigs to put him out of the party.†

The arrogance of this New England Achilles ill hid, in truth, his wounded pride. His Virginian alliance had failed, and he knew it had. The Herculean task assigned him had been to dragoon New England Whiggery to Tyler's support; but in point of fact he had not even prevailed upon the Whigs of his own State, where his star was most worshipped, to do so much as defer their oath of allegiance to Henry Clay. Webster might split his party out of spite should he see fit to try it, but he could not conduct it whither he liked. Clay's nomination made it needful, therefore, for Webster to retire; Tyler's conclave had retained him chiefly for his influence to prevent it.‡ There was a deeper reason, too,—Texas annexation, a scheme which the President had been turning constantly with his intimates; they, from the first, had been bent on getting rid of the Massachusetts statesman, knowing he was an obstacle to the scheme, nor believing him indispensable to the British arrangement, which in their view was of secondary moment. Webster knew what they meditated and worried over it in secret; in many ways his cabinet berth was uncomfortable. Not a month had passed after the breach with Clay before the President sounded his Secretary on the Texas project,§ and Web-

* See 63 Niles, 232.

† See 2 Webster's Works; 63 Niles; 11 Adams's Diary.

‡ See Tyler's Tyler, chap. 9.

§ 2 Tyler's Tyler, 118, 126 (October, 1841). The President's letter betrays his own ardor on the subject, and he argues that, granting

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ster's reticence was not to be depended on. Webster was deeply involved in debt; he saw the Democrats coming into favor while his own party left him behind. Yet to support Clay was almost unendurable; his envious nature prompted him to let luckier nominees fight their battles without him; and in this mood his first wish was to go abroad and leave politics behind. Tyler, who was affable and kind, whenever it came to the point of gentlemanly civility, treated the case with due delicacy.* Together they tried to get Congress to appropriate for a special mission to Great Britain, but the bill was voted down in committee.† Another door of escape was opened in a proposed mission to China, which the President commended in a message written out by his Secretary.‡ Con-

1842. December. gress appropriated the money§ to open relations with that rich and populous empire; and Everett, our minister to England, was at once nominated and confirmed to the post. Had Everett accepted, his Eng-

1843. March. lish vacancy would have been filled by Webster, and Webster's friends did all they fairly could to fire the eloquent diplomatist with missionary zeal.|| But

Texas annexation was a slave measure, perhaps some of the present slave States would make a counterpoise by embracing freedom. See 11 Adams's Diary, 214, in allusion to a story (not corroborated) that Louis McLane was offered Webster's place in the cabinet when Lord Ashburton came over.

* 2 Curtis's Webster, chap. 30.

† 11 Adams's Diary, 327. The idea which had been broached under Lord Ashburton was to procure a tripartite treaty between Mexico, Great Britain, and the United States, making a lever of the British claims against Mexico to adjust the Oregon boundary, so as to satisfy the two greater powers at the cost of the third.

‡ 2 Curtis's Webster. Of the purpose of this mission we shall speak presently. Adams, at a glance, surmised that this was contrived for Webster's retreat from the cabinet. 11 Adams, 327, 335.

§ Act March 3, 1842, c. 90, which appropriated $40,000.

|| 2 Tyler, chap. 9; 11 Adams's Memoirs. Webster was thankful to Adams when the latter, appreciating his want, threw in a good word to aid him. In 2 Curtis's Webster, 178, Webster's own letter to Everett is interpreted differently, but our learned biographer is somewhat obtuse about reading through the lines of that delicate epistle.

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Everett, who was no missionary, felt comfortable enough where he was; and his fellow-statesman inclining quite as little to be banished to the heathen celestials in the interest of commerce, the place went to another Massachusetts scholar more adventurous in seeking fields of distinction. Caleb Cushing, thrice rejected for the Treasury, consented to put the Pacific sea between himself and the Whig party, with which he had broken for Webster's sake. He took Webster's son with him as secretary of legation. The President had now cancelled his debt to the great Secretary's friends, and so they understood it. Webster resigned from the cabinet on the same day that the Chinese appointments were promulgated; his resignation was at once accepted; and though the polite President reciprocated all good wishes and added a little civil flattery, he expressed not the slightest regret or reluctance at the separation. No public reasons for Webster's retirement were ever divulged on either side.* May 8.

Not to leave an impression in the public mind that there was any want of cordiality between them, John Tyler went to Massachusetts soon after, and attended the commemoration exercises at Bunker Hill. Webster's address pronounced on the completion of the granite shaft was the great feature of this celebration. The President was accompanied by the southern members of his cabinet and a bustling and assiduous train of office-holders. The orator avoided the pageant, and sat on the platform solitary and alone long before the procession arrived at the monument. His address was a splendid one, suffering only by comparison with his former one at the laying of the corner-stone. The people flocked to hear him from all parts of New England. "Thank God! that I also am an American!" he exclaimed, with solemn fervor, June 17.

* 2 Benton, 562, says that Tyler became reserved and indifferent to Webster, and, in brief, "froze him out." This is denied by Tyler's biographer, who gives the impression rather that Webster felt uneasy, and tried to get out. 2 Tyler, 263. Both agree that the Texas intrigue had reached a point where it was impossible they could continue in office together. And see 2 Curtis's Webster.

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in that well-remembered passage of the oration; and American he truly was in the now unaccustomed sense of private citizen. He left public life embarrassed, and his unthrifty habits and love of natural pleasures threw him henceforth upon the generosity of friends as long as he lived, though his professional fees were a fortune.* But this oration at once rescued his genius from the lapse into private retirement which for a moment seemed imminent. Once more he reinstated himself with Clay and the Whig party, who welcomed him back like another Achilles.† Webster made his escape in time. Would that he had never laid that great head in slavery's lap a second time to be shorn of his manhood. No southern alliance could advance the hopes of a northerner with his antecedents. That bright-colored rainbow of ambition that spanned the Union like an arch resting north and south was as far from his reach as the iris of a summer shower.

June. During Tyler's visit died Legaré, the Attorney-General, head of the State department *ad interim* after Webster's retirement. He had followed behind the President's suite, arriving at Boston on the day of the Bunker Hill celebration, which he was too sick to attend. A rare jurist, in the prime of life, his death made the cabinet gap wider which the President had essayed to fill. Soon after returning to Washington, Tyler's new list was completed. Upshur at last was Secretary of State, as his friends had long been planning; John Nelson, of Maryland, Attorney-General; David Henshaw, of Massachusetts, Secretary of the Navy in Upshur's place, John C. Spencer had already been transferred to the Treasury;‡ and James H. Porter, of Pennsylvania, succeeded him in the

* 2 Curtis's Webster; 11 Adams, 47.

† See Letcher correspondence in 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 195, 204; Clay's Priv. Corr., 478, 479; 2 Curtis's Webster. He made overtures as early as December, 1842. Henceforth it was given out that his detention in the cabinet had been chiefly owing to the condition of British affairs, etc.

‡ *Supra*, p. 433.

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War department. Porter, Henshaw, and Nelson were Democrats, and this whole list, Spencer excepted, had yet to pass the ordeal of confirmation by the Senate. Spencer was a last beacon light of Whig and northern influence, and he soon found he had burned too long.

The Virginian by this time was rapidly boxing the compass round to the point of State rights and southern Democracy, but the rehearsal was not yet over. Placed between the fires of the two contending parties, he had resolved this summer upon a new and bolder move. He saw that the Democrats, with whom he wished to reunite, would neither surrender loco-focoism nor throw overboard leaders like Benton and Van Buren to please him,—that their strategists, in point of fact, were quite as wary not to let him capture, as the Whigs had been to drive him out. He stood solitary and alone. His original plan to attract moderates of both parties to a moderate platform had utterly failed.* Should he now make an abject surrender to the ultra Democrats or march on his own daring expedition? He resolved on the latter course, and while urging his own name for the Presidency, and rallying all he could to his standard, to put himself in a position to strike a blow if he could not conquer. His vanity made him an ardent candidate; but later on he seems to have imagined himself only pretending to be one in order that he might control events by throwing in the weight of his organization for the "public good."† This summer, then, John Tyler took the field. His recruiting offices were thrown open with large bounties offered from the public patronage and his flag was flung to the breeze. Removals became the order of the day, and pliant devotees were smuggled into positions. His accredited organ and the *Madisonian*, of Washington, followed by the lesser tooters of the administration, blew up their pipes to the tune of a "great country's party," with John Tyler as the

1843.

* 2 Tyler, 247–249.

† 2 Tyler's Tyler, 250. Observe the ambiguous turn of expression in President Tyler's explanation here quoted.

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most available man to unite North and South. But the Democracy would not dance to this music. "Tyler could not be elected," responded the *Globe*, "if all the newspapers in the United States went for him;" and the Richmond *Enquirer* advised the President, and very wisely, to give up all idea of being a candidate and cleanse himself of the earwigs that were whispering mischief, and then he might hope to carry his measures. All the fierce fiddling, in short, produced no responsive vibration. The fall elections showed the Whigs united, the Democrats without a schism, and there was in neither party not the shadow of a party to bolster up the renegade.*

July.

Sept.–Nov.

But the volatile Virginian had already placed a firebrand behind each camp which would soon force parties from their position. That firebrand was the Texas slaveholders' annexation. Abhorrent as the whole scheme had been to North and West, and the great majority, indeed, of our population, it drew the sympathy, active or inert, of a large fraction of the South, whose institution felt more and more the need of some new guarantee against the assaults of the abolitionists. To our planters this union of Texas with the United States seemed natural, like the commingling of kindred drops of water, for this colony was of their own planting; it was Tennessee and our States on the gulf that conquered the Mexican army at San Jacinto. But natural gravitation would not have absorbed Texas into the American Union in fifty years; for annexation meant sectional and not national advantage in this age, and the bitterest heartburning.

The effort had been made to infect the whole country with this Texas fever and it had failed. There was no sanction from Congress, no favorable expression of public sentiment in favor of annexation; the whole movement of the Tyler guard in that direction was secret and stealthy, like a night-march. What had become of that morbid

* Newspapers of the day.

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chastity over the constraints of the constitution? At the moment of parading it to the world Tyler indulged the sensual vision of a rape. "Could the North be reconciled to it," he wrote of Texas annexation, "could anything throw so bright a lustre around us?"* To him, to the ardent of his section, the epitome of political economy was in the maxim, which gained ground, "Cotton is king." Cotton had risen rapidly in price, and Texas, with its fraternity of States, offered a new and vast area for the development of slave labor. Tyler was not unsupported in his wishes. A report from the legislature of Mississippi had lately argued that the peculiar interests of the South could best be protected by the annexation of Texas. The legislatures of Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi adopted resolutions in favor of annexation and forwarded them to Congress. Wise himself, the President's preceptor, in two speeches delivered in the House, dwelt very strongly upon the need of an equipoise of North and South; the Union, he said, had one of two alternatives, either to receive Texas into our fraternity of States or else leave her to conquer Mexico in a crusade of her own, which would enroll hundreds of volunteers from our southwest valley, and then the extension of slavery would not stop short of the Pacific.† The whole tenor of ultra-southern speech and conversation in Congress proposed, in a word, to annex Texas for the direct purpose of extending slavery and maintaining the balance of sectional power, and the most profligate contempt for Mexico's rights of sovereignty accompanied the proposal. It was upon evidence like this that a warning manifesto to the free States was issued from the capital on the adjournment of the late Congress, which bore the names of Adams, Giddings, and eleven other members;‡ but they were thought alarmists, and the country gave little attention to the document.

1842.

1841–43.

1843. March.

* 2 Tyler, 126 (Oct., 1841).

† 64 Niles, 173; 2 Tyler, 255; Adams's Diary.

‡ 64 Niles, 173.

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What we have mentioned might be called legitimate effort to persuade the people or their chosen representatives to take action. This same period, however, saw a deeper conspiracy working in the Executive circle. Not only were northern Congressmen kept ignorant of it, but the northern members of Tyler's cabinet, even Webster, his Secretary of State. Sam Houston, whose first offer of annexation was made and withdrawn,* had been succeeded by Mirabeau B. Lamar as President of the lone star republic. Lamar's rule aimed at the complete independence of Texas, and he took Van Buren's refusal for a final one; but on this same issue of annexation or no annexation Houston was presently elected over him by an immense vote, and negotiations then began again. Houston was homesick to be under the stars and stripes, and he knew something of the new President's disposition and surroundings. One Reilly, who resided in Washington as minister from Texas, revived the proposition in the spring of 1842; but at that time the cause seemed hopeless in the temper of Congress, though Upshur and Gilmer, Senator Robert J. Walker, of Mississippi, and the President himself expressed their warm personal interest.† Reilly returned to Texas and was succeeded in his mission by Van Zandt, who renewed the proposition; but Congress would listen to nothing. So hostile and suspicious appeared the Senate that even a simple treaty of amity and commerce which Webster had negotiated with Reilly failed of concurrence. The President declined the new proposal of annexation in consequence, and that minister emphatically declared that Texas could not properly take the first step to renew these proposals.‡

1840-43.

1837-38.

1841.

1842. March-September.

1843. February.

The President, however, had shown sufficient signs of his good-will in the business. The chief objection from a

* *Supra*, p. 303.

† "The President would act in a moment," wrote Reilly, "if the Senate would assent;" 2 Yoakum's Texas, 347; 2 Tyler, 256; 78 Niles, 147.

‡ 2 Tyler, 256; 2 Yoakum, 407.

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purely national point of view, and aside from northern anti-slavery sentiment, was the offence that we should undoubtedly give to Mexico by annexing her late province. Five years had elapsed since the battle of San Jacinto, with no warfare carried on beyond a petty marauding on either side: and yet Mexico constantly refused to acknowledge the independence of Texas and announced her intention to reinstate her authority. The United States, too, had become bound by solemn convention with Mexico to take money for whatever spoliations she had committed, and there was something dastardly in taking full advantage of this compact and at the same time robbing her of her dominions. Van Buren rested upon that convention;* and under it a mixed commission sat presently at Washington to examine these claims which the Jackson dynasty had pressed with such insolent threats. Less than one-fifth of them all were allowed, three-fourths being thrown out as spurious, and others outlawed which were of the same speculative and fraudulent character, trumped up for provoking a quarrel; and, in fine, instead of nearly $12,000,000 worth of outrages, as alleged, only $2,000,000 could be figured out, and the most liberal extension of time for making proof would hardly have stretched the total aggregate of honest claims beyond $3,000,000.† Before the Whigs were a year in office, the functions of this commission expired; but under pressure from President Tyler, Mexico expressed her assent to a new tribunal for passing upon the outlawed claims, having already arranged to pay by the last of April, 1843, whatever interest might accrue on the award made under the previous convention, as well as the amount of the award itself within five years in equal quarterly instalments. This new arrangement‡ was effected by Waddy Thompson, of South Carolina, Tyler's own accredited minister to Mexico, and it secured to the United States a new and im-

1840–41.

1842. February.

* *Supra*, p. 307. This was the convention of 1839.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft's United States, 318.

‡ It was dated January 30, 1843; 8 U. S. Statutes, 578.

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portant advantage, for it provided that the award should be paid in gold and silver. Under the terms of the Van Buren convention these claims might have been paid off in Mexican treasury notes which had sunk to thirty cents on the dollar."* The accrued interest was paid, and the first three instalments of the award, through the first quarter of 1844, all in solid metal; but in order to meet these sums the debtor republic had to levy forced loans and almost literally take the rags off the back of its suffering people.† 1843-44.

The story of Pizarro repeats itself, with shabbier embellishment; but the inca here becomes the Spanish-American, while the Anglo-American is Pizarro. Miserable Mexico hoped to subdue, or at least buy off, the cupidity of the American Union with gold. But our proud planter saw nothing in this forced settlement of claims to hinder him from a conquest. Deportment was a great point with Tyler in the management of affairs, and he flattered himself greatly at this time that with his airy and diplomatic touch he could keep Mexico in good humor while plucking her at his heart's content; that she had her price and he had only to fix upon it. But has poverty no pride? Did he appreciate the fact that revolutionized Texas had no real bounds but those which filibustering ambition might assign for despoiling Mexico to the Pacific slope? Was he aware that the Mexican people were, after all, not cool and mercenary, but brave and irritable, with too much of the folly of patriotism, when pushed hard, to make prudent cowards? In spite of ignorance, misrule, and corruption from which this sister republic suffered constantly, her national spirit was strong. While Lamar was President

* See 2 Tyler, 268, explaining why Thompson was appointed; he turned out a Clay man in 1844, and wrote a book upon Mexico. It is to Thompson's credit, that going out to Mexico a slaveholder and a rabid annexationist, he became more kindly disposed, after coming in contact with the ruling circle, and observing how anxiously our sister republic, proud and impoverished as she was, strove to keep peace with the United States and preserve her autonomy.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft's United States, chap. 11.

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of Texas, an expedition marched under the colors of that republic against Santa Fé, in New Mexico, and it was organized, armed, and equipped by recruits from the United States openly enlisted in New Orleans and other southern cities. This exploit was meant to swell the Texan area and it miserably failed; those engaged in it were captured before firing a gun. Hanging and shooting had been Jackson's infliction on his prisoners under similar conditions,* but the Mexican general, Santa Anna, released this whole body of prisoners, and in so doing cancelled whatever he owed for the clemency extended to him at San Jacinto. He released these Americans with a gentle warning not to repeat the offence; and yet another invasion was fitted out at the first opportunity.† Mexico's hope had been by such clemency to detach from Texas that dreaded ally. She renewed official intercourse with the United States about the same time, reciprocating the mission of Thompson by sending to Washington a minister in General Almonte. She accepted, too, an assurance of American neutrality which Tyler's Secretary had given in no very gentle tone.‡

1841. 1842. October.

At almost the very same moment our navy struck a blow at her California possessions which might well make Mexico tremble with the fear of perfidy. Contrary to Jeffersonian traditions, usually so sacred to our new President, he had called for large warlike expenditures. With his confidential Upshur presiding over the Navy department, a new activity was quickly infused into that branch of the service. More ships, seamen, and officers were called for in the same breath that an immense deficit of revenue was announced. Steam vessels of a new pattern were built, and squadrons under the starry flag patrolled the distant seas, while a "home squadron" hovered about our coast as though war were approaching. Even the suppression of the slave-trade, under the Ashburton treaty,§ was a means

* Vol. iii, p. 71, as to Arbuthnot and Ambrister.

† See 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 11: Tyler's Message, December, 1842.

‡ Ib.; 2 Tyler, chap. 9; 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13.

§ *Supra*, p. 402.

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to the same swelling end. Honest Whigs were suspicious of some design in all this deeper than the vaunted glory of a strong peace establishment. Whether more was meant or not than this policy showed on its surface, an American squadron sailed soon for the California coast, under command of Commodore Thomas Jones. While cruising about, Jones came upon a copy of somewhat querulous Mexico's complaints of American neutrality,* and a newspaper containing a false rumor that California had just been ceded to Great Britain. Forthwith he sailed to Monterey, and took summary possession of that port in the name of the United States.† Scarcely, however, had he raised the stars and stripes, garrisoned the fort, and proclaimed a conquest of California, when new advices showed him that he had mistaken the situation, and in twenty-four hours after the Mexican surrender he restored possession of the place and sailed from the bay.‡ It was not strange that Mexico took alarm at this act, which betrayed prematurely her own feeble grasp of that region and our desires. President Tyler made smooth apologies, disapproving the commodore's action, and recalling him, though refusing to have him punished.§ That seizure may have meant more or less; but the truth was that three great powers, Great Britain, France, and the United States, all cherished hopes of California, though what their precise designs it is impossible to say. Each had been much impressed by the soft climate and fertility of that region, each had cast longing eyes at San Francisco, the Golden Gate, and rarest of the rare harbors on that far-off coast; and each had felt, too, that California might easily be wrested from the Mexican republic. All three powers eyed one another with jealousy, but the best opportunity, of course, was ours, for California lay in the path of American

1842. October.

* See 9 Adams's Diary; 2 Tyler, 265; 2 Benton, 452.

† Two notes of Bocanegro, written in May, to which Webster had since replied.

‡ 2 Tyler, 265; 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13.

§ 2 Tyler; 16 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 12.

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empire, while the "Monroe doctrine" was a constant menace to European rivalry. We have seen the United States actually proposing to Mexico the purchase of this fair province,* which seemed golden even while its richest treasures were concealed; and though the proposal failed, our Washington cabinets had since adhered pertinaciously to their right of pre-emption. Mexican claims and the Texan revolution gave new levers for procuring this acquisition for the Union, and colonization made a third, always the most formidable of all. That stream of overland settlement, when once started for a given point, never ceased to flow, and now was it that the pioneer current stole gently into northern California by the way of New Mexico and Oregon; in vain did Mexican authority essay to stop its flow.† That Jones had sailed to the Pacific under secret instructions from the Executive to watch the prey, is conceded, and possibly he was warranted to do no more.‡ Our President had, at all events, been trying to bring a British pressure to bear upon Mexico which would squeeze us out this precious strip of territory, we in return consenting to drop the line of the Oregon boundary to the line of the Columbia River.§

1841-43.

Thus stood affairs with Texas and Mexico when Webster withdrew in gloomy disappointment from the cabinet. Of the two secret overtures for Texas annexation which had come to the President in the mean time, he probably knew nothing, for the southern cabal hid from him the concerns of his own department.‖ A bolder hand was played when Upshur succeeded to this

1843. May.

* *Supra*, p. 305. † 16 H. H. Bancroft, chaps. 5, 11, 16.

‡ See 2 Tyler, 266, where the distinction as to Jones's orders is drawn in that somewhat dubious phrase so common to Tyler's explanations. And see 69 Niles, 147.

§ *Supra*, p. 401; 11 Adams's Diary; 2 Tyler, chap. 9. This, in fact, was the great object of that tripartite negotiation, encouraged by Ashburton's mission, for which Webster's special mission to London was proposed, which Congress declined to sanction.

‖ *Supra*, p. 442. This is an important point to understand in relation to the conspiracy for Texas. The present writer was impressed with

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portfolio on the death of Legaré, and the late southern movement for annexation narrowed down to a dark-lantern conspiracy. The administration, or the southern portion of it, had positive aims in this direction; and the more so that rumors had got afloat that Great Britain had some philanthropic plan in view for inducing Texas to embrace abolition with its recognized independence. The alarm on this latter point was needless; for, with all its humane spirit, the British government was the last one to sacrifice commerce for principle. Wary of becoming involved in these continental difficulties,* it had helped, however, the course of Texan independence. A truce was effected between Texas and the parent republic, both belligerents being much exhausted; negotiation followed, and Mexico offered its insurgent province home rule without independent sovereignty, which Texas declined. Next in order was what, doubtless, British policy was anxious to effect,—namely, full independence on condition that Texas should not annex herself to any other country.† Schemes had been entertained for introducing French and English colonists into Texas; but to this the Mexican government put in its caveat.‡ In the same jealous spirit Mexico notified the United States that any act of Congress for annexing Texas would be looked upon as cause of war.

September.

May–June.

August 23.

Webster's apparent ignorance in 1842 of this whole subject, and his surprise at the later casual revelations of his successor which contrasts strongly with the narrative of Tyler's son, vol. ii, p. 256. He requested a search of the State archives, and is informed that they show no connection of Webster with the rejected proposals of Reilly and Van Zandt. The inference is irresistible that the President consulted his southern friends, leaving Webster out, and that proposal and rejection did not pass through the regular channel. Letter of State department, May 13, 1888.

* 2 Tyler, chap. 10; 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13; 12 Adams's Diary, 66.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 11. Our minister to Mexico, Thompson, scouts the idea of England's supposed influence with Mexico. Thompson's Recoll., 236–238. England wanted a settlement of claims and the extension of her commerce.

‡ 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13.

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One would have thought, from Secretary Upshur's remonstrance against the effort to coerce Texas back to her allegiance, that the cruelty practised was all on the Mexican side.* His object, of course, was to frighten Mexico into making peace with her late province, and so clear the way for an independent annexation, the only safe one. Not for one moment had our Executive intended, as the despatch implied, to wait and see whether Mexico could prosecute its civil war in a more Christian manner. On the contrary, Tyler and his new premier were already on their new and secret track, and working assiduously to annex Texas at once. This time the United States had to take the initiative; and under the President's sanction Upshur accordingly proposed annexation to Van Zandt, the Texan minister, who was still in Washington. The preliminaries were arranged about the middle of October, and the next step was for Texas to despatch an agent suitably empowered to receive a formal proposal.†

1843. Sept. 13.

August–September.

October 16.

At first the Texas government was coy of these advances. To take President Houston, as he explained himself afterwards, it was only a maiden's art to inflame her lover; but we may suspect there were some baffling influences,—pique, for instance, at the former repulse, British efforts, and a well-founded doubt whether Tyler could carry his country with him. It was indeed a hazardous game to play, and no wonder if Houston hesitated; European powers had brought about an armistice with Mexico, and negotiations for Texan independence were begun: peace without annexation or a renewal of war seemed the alternative. Our Secretary reasoned with Houston in this dilemma. If this proposal be rejected, so he wrote, we shall become the bitterest foes, instead of being, as we ought, the closest friends; "without annexation Texas cannot maintain slavery ten years,—probably not half that time." In

1844. Jan. 14–16.

* Ib.; 2 Tyler, chap. 9. It was more imperious than that of Webster in January.

† 2 Tyler, 277; 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 18.

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his eagerness he added the assurance, in bold italics, that a clear constitutional two-thirds of the United States Senate were in favor of such a treaty; a strange assertion to make when hardly a single senator knew of this intrigue.*

Houston's heart yearned to bring Texas under the old flag, and he did not balance long. The wheels of peace drove heavily while Upshur was plying his arguments; Mexico and Great Britain had fallen out over some childish affront, and the people of Texas were but removed Americans. The hero of San Jacinto had meantime consulted his old chieftain and patron, whose timely advice was annexation and silence;† and this appears to have settled Houston's purpose, for Jackson could carry a point where Tyler might fail. To his own mind it was not doubtful that annexation, or even the effort to annex, to the United States would exasperate Mexico and expose Texas to a fresh invasion which she could not resist unaided. Finding his own Congress disposed to annexation, Houston went to the kernel of the case with a new secret proposal; that the United States government should pledge itself, in the first place, to fight Mexico in defensive alliance with Texas and station its troops and fleets in position. This guarantee, in its first crude shape, staggered our Executive; but Houston, catching the drift of our disposition, sent one Henderson to Washington as a special agent with full powers to negotiate an annexation treaty in conjunction with Van Zandt.‡ It so happened that on the very day Houston's resolve was thus taken the commissioners of Texas and Mexico signed at Sabinas the formal armistice which held out to Texas the fair prospect of her independence on the condition of remaining outside the American Union. Houston was no novice in duplicity; and receiving this document when

Jan. 23.

Feb. 15.

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13; Upshur's letter to Murphy, our diplomatic agent in Texas; 2 Tyler, chap. 10.

† 2 Yoakum's Texas, 425.

‡ See Murphy's despatch of Feb. 17, 1843 (2 Tyler, 287), to President Tyler himself, in which the modest request is made, of a naval force to be placed in the Gulf of Mexico subject to Murphy's order.

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Henderson was well on his way, he put his finger upon the first line, where Texas was called a mere "department," and rejected the armistice with well-feigned scorn.*

Our southern Americans, expatriated or at home, felt no compunction about fleecing Mexico. In fact, the southern temperament was sinking to about the same register for Indian, negro, and Spanish-American; none had rights which a slave-master felt bound to respect. But the hunters kept the trail covered as they moved on. The President's annual message, when Congress met, had cleverly thrown the legislators off the scent, at the same time vindicating their right to sustain what he was doing. Mexico's warning against dismemberment, which she gave rightfully under the law of nations, was his text. Without a hint that the Executive was forestalling Congress in this business, he answered with spirit and defiantly that Texas was by this time practically independent, and that Congress had a perfect right to treat for annexation without any reference to the republic which was trying to coerce her.† It was upon this theory of the situation that the sanguine Upshur sounded the Senate about a treaty, if, indeed, he sounded it at all.‡ 1843.

This same Congress, which listened to the message containing this rhetorical reminder that Mexico had waged

* 2 Tyler, 288.

† Message and Ex. Docs.; 65 Niles.

‡ See 2 Tyler, 283, which seems to labor under the hallucination that Upshur actually got his constitutional two-thirds pledged to him with the aid of Gilmer, who was admitted to the secret of the negotiation. But Upshur's letters in the context show his mind too guileless of politics to weigh calmly the relations of his circle to the rest of the country; and it was the same when he figured the election majorities he was expecting. The Senate was not aware of the intrigue for Texas which was going on, and how could senators have pledged themselves? What Congress would do for annexation of its own free motion was no criterion of what it would do in this instance. The administration seems to have had the conceit that some votes had been won by artful favors, as, *e.g.*, Benton's by the selection of his son-in-law to head an exploring expedition. Tyler, ib.

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war upon Texas long enough, convened on the fourth day of December. While the Whigs stood guard still over the Senate, their majority had been buried in the House. Outnumbering them in that branch by more than two to one, the Democrats chose as Speaker John W. Jones, of Virginia; they displaced the old and faithful clerk for an obscure partisan, who proved very speedily a defaulter;* they elected Blair and Rives the public printers in utter contempt of the President's wishes.

1843. Dec. 4.

Some new men here appeared, marked for rising renown: among them Howell Cobb, a Democrat, and Alexander H. Stephens, a Whig, of Georgia, the latter a man of puny frame, who made an able speech in the first session as a defender of his State; Robert C. Schenck, of Ohio, a caustic and clear debater on the Whig side; Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, who, in force of influence and ambition, excelled among the younger men of this body. The free northwest had given to the public service Harrison, McLean, Cass, Ewing, and Corwin already; yet for a long time her harvest of national men averaged the level of her wheat-fields, and none ranked among popular orators but Corwin and Douglas. Douglas had a small and compact frame, whence issued a surprisingly stentorian voice, and his type of eloquence at once startled the House by its novelty. As he warmed up in speech, his grave face became convulsed, his gesticulation frantic, and, while roaring and lashing about with energy, he would strip off his cravat and unbutton his waistcoat to save himself from choking, until his whole air and aspect, as he stood at his desk, was that of a half-naked pugilist hurling defiance at the presiding officer.† But all this gave at once to his person that picturesqueness which goes half-way towards making one a figure in public life; and, like Disraeli among the English aristocracy, Douglas rose by making himself indispensable to the slave-

* Cong. Debates. Jones received 128 votes against 59 cast for John White, the Whig Speaker of the preceding House.

† See Adams's Diary, February, 1844.

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holding class, who needed just such a commoner for a foil and northern ally. "Little Giant" he was presently called, for, being both able and adroit in policy, and full of resources, he gave the image of power under close compression. Cave Johnson, of Tennessee, and Charles J. Ingersoll, of Philadelphia, men of larger experience, were the House leaders at present.

This House was the first one chosen under the new census and a new rule of apportionment which increased slightly the former fractional ratio. But the more important section of the new apportionment act which was passed by a Whig Congress the year before did away with elections on a general ticket by declaring that throughout the Union all representatives should hereafter be chosen by single districts.* It was a just reform; it avoided further contests like that over the New Jersey delegation;† it gave uniformity, and distributed more widely the influence of the people. But while the bill was on its passage, New Hampshire and Georgia, Democratic States, protested against this change; and the President, when he approved the act, went out of his way to file a doubt whether this provision accorded with the constitution. This was a novel proceeding, and its effect was to encourage States to nullify the act as they pleased. Four States, New Hampshire, Georgia, Mississippi, and Missouri, failed to choose their representatives to this Congress by districts, but adhered to the general ticket. Had not the Democrats controlled the House so strongly, there might have been trouble; as it turned out, the will of Congress on this point was not opposed again.

The political disconcert of the two Houses was unfavorable to legislation; measures which passed one branch would fail in the other; but nowhere at the capitol was visible an administration party. Even the corporal's guard had dispersed, one after another billeted among the stray offices whenever an opportunity was found. Cushing, far off in China, was confirmed for his post because it was too

* Act June 25, 1842. † *Supra*, p. 321.

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late to despatch another. Wise, who had failed of France, was made minister to Brazil. Other appointments passed the ordeal of the Senate. William R. King, of Alabama, received, without objection, the French mission. Meantime, the Tyler cabinet underwent change. Promptly did the Senate reject Porter and Henshaw, of the list chosen in the recess; and to their places were confirmed William Wilkins, of Pennsylvania, as Secretary of War, and Thomas W. Gilmer, the last of the Virginia clique, Secretary of the Navy. The star of John C. Spencer sunk in gloom; the Texas intrigue was a hideous revelation; he would have carried his secret disquiet to the cloister of the Supreme bench, a vacancy occurring, but the Senate balked his purpose.* He left the Treasury and public station in his prime with a blasted ambition. His brief cabinet career was clouded in its recollection by an agonizing tragedy.†

1843–44.

1844. February.

It seemed as if a curse rested on all the statesmen who bent to the plans of this renegade President. "He has returned to his idols; leave him alone;" this was the warning whispered by the breeze. Gay and merry was the throng on board the steam man-of-war "Princeton" that sailed down the Potomac on a trial-trip to see Commodore Stockton's huge "Peacemaker" throw its balls of two hundred pounds' weight. President Tyler himself was there, a gallant widower, whose attentions to the fairest belle made airy gossip; his cabinet, too, members of both Houses of Congress, civilians, and many ladies. Sad and funereal was the return at sunset, for the "Peacemaker," exploding at its farewell shot, killed, crushed, or stunned many distinguished people who stood near. Two members of the cabinet, Upshur and Gilmer, Tyler's most intimate advisers, lost their lives; Mr. Gardi-

1844. Feb. 28.

* 12 Adams's Diary, 60; newspapers of May, 1844.

† See narrative of the alleged mutiny at sea on the United States brig "Somers," in 1842, in 2 Benton's View, 522. Captain Alexander Slidell Mackenzie had Secretary Spencer's son (who was a young midshipman) hanged at the yard-arm as an alleged ringleader, a terrible punishment for what, perhaps, was a wild and boyish freak.

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ner, too, the father of the belle who was Tyler's future bride. Had not the President been called aside at that very moment, he, too, might have perished. A naval officer was killed; and, stunned by the concussion, Benton narrowly escaped with his life.* A second time within three years was the official abode draped in black, and four coffins lay there in state.

Upshur and Gilmer, whose tragic death makes the "Princeton" disaster historical, were men of full prime and promise, and Virginia gentlemen, too, of as fair a type as that mouldering State then furnished; but if in American annals their names stand for more than secret fortifiers of slavery, the record fails to show it. Who should succeed Upshur was of critical moment. The man selected was Calhoun, the high-priest of pro-slavery expansion and Garrison's antipodes. Tyler shrank from appointing him, but was trapped by the last of his choice spirits, who cared less than he did to keep up national appearances. Wise himself has narrated how it was done; Tyler's sons corroborate him, and the story shows that "the man of Roman firmness" could be the puppet of his bosom friends.† Calhoun's name was sent to the Senate and at once confirmed.‡ To Gilmer's place succeeded John Y. Mason, of

* See the description in 2 Benton, 567; newspapers of the day.

† Wise's Decades, 221; 2 Tyler, 294. Wise, who was about to depart for his Brazil mission, felt that Calhoun was the man for the emergency, but, knowing that the President did not want him in the cabinet, he took his own course. Calhoun had now retired from Congress. Wise took the liberty of sending an invitation, through McDuffie, of the Senate, as though by the President's authority. He next waited upon Tyler, whom he found bathed in tears. "What is to be done?" asked the President. "Texas and John C. Calhoun" was Wise's reply; and finding that he could not overcome Tyler's objections on the latter branch of the proposal, he told him how he had committed him already to the great southerner. Honor among southern gentlemen was a law with Tyler; he mildly rebuked his officious friend, but rather than try to disentangle so difficult a skein he accepted Wise's selection. This choice was against Tyler's own judgment, and his own biographer records that Wise's officiousness provoked him greatly.

‡ Before McDuffie's letter to Calhoun had, in fact, reached him. Wise's Decades, 221; 2 Tyler, 294.

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Virginia, once a member of the House. George M. Bibb,
June. of Kentucky, took Spencer's post in the Treasury before the session ended. Tyler's needle pointed at last due south; his policy was for State rights in everything but to resist the extension of the Union. Not a Whig was left in his cabinet, nor a single northern man, except the negative Wilkins, whose day of public importance was over. Gone was that national galaxy of Whig statesmen that had clustered on Harrison's horizon.

Calhoun accepted his place, after a brief deliberation,
March. like one who confers a favor. As an independent Democrat, he had that tantalizing honor which befalls so many illustrious and independent citizens, of being constantly mentioned for an honor to which he could never be chosen. At this very time, South Carolina, in her devotion to his interests, offered him to the country as an anti-convention candidate for the Presidency. In his new place, Calhoun seemed the master-spirit that Webster had aspired to be. With the toga of his integrity and sublime egotism he so enveloped this backsliding administration, that Tyler at last felt overshadowed and abashed. A cold constraint marked their official relations, which was due greatly to former differences and their clashing rivalry. Tyler, who was a man of exuberant fancy, liked to persuade himself that he had in view the welfare of the whole people and was earning a wide popularity, while Calhoun made no concealment of his national unpopularity, of his southern and sectional aims. This new Secretary, in after years, took to himself the whole glory of Texas annexation, and Benton always believed him to be its machinating deity.* But the President should not be shorn of his sunbeams. Texas, just now, was the card of John Tyler's ambition, and Upshur played the hand to the day of his death.†

* See 2 Benton, 581, where the theory is developed that this was a bold intrigue of Calhoun, not Tyler, for the Presidency.

† 2 Tyler, chap. 10. The only support for Calhoun's claim, as he made it, is in the possibility that Wise, Upshur, and Gilmer, who man-

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To take up once more the thread of this intrigue,* Secretary Upshur had verbally engaged with Van Zandt that as soon as an annexation treaty was signed the President would move our frontier troops so as to protect Texas from invasion. Nelson, the Attorney-General, who took the portfolio of State *ad interim* after Upshur's death, tutored Murphy upon the fine distinction to be drawn between employing our troops and vessels against Mexico, which was unlawful, and so concentrating them that Mexico could not reach her revolted province. Henderson, the secret agent of President Houston,† arrived at Washington on the 28th of March, and the next day Calhoun entered upon his cabinet duties, more than three weeks after his confirmation by the Senate.‡

March.

Mar. 28-29.

The final business was brief and simple, the delicate point having been the guarantee of Texas against invasion. That guarantee given, the treaty was signed early in April, and the President at once issued his orders; American troops were stationed near the Sabine border, and a strong naval force despatched to the Gulf of Mexico. Tyler sent a special messenger, besides, to the Mexican capital, so as to keep open the door to conciliate and explain; for Minister Thompson had already left. This messenger called upon the Mexican President; he asked Mexico's assent to this treaty, which imperious necessity had forced us to make; he offered gold, moreover, if Mexico would arrange for a difference in limits. Both proposals were instantly rejected. "Mexico," answered Santa Anna, proudly, "is resolved to reconquer Texas."§ "British designs forced us to take the step we

April 12.

aged the President, drew their secret inspiration from the great nullifier and confided their operations to him. Of this we find no proof; but Calhoun, it is true, had urged the scheme in 1836, and a private letter, lately written by him to Gilmer, had been shown about among friends in the Senate supposed to be friendly to annexation. Ib.

* *Supra*, p. 451. † *Supra*, p. 450. ‡ 2 Tyler, chap. 10.

§ 2 Tyler, chap. 10; 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13; 66 Niles, 351.

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had taken; we had to forestall:" this was the American excuse, and there was little candor in it. This British plot, as it was called, was to persuade Texas to abolish its own slavery. When Secretary Upshur had directly charged such a plot, Lord Aberdeen denied it; he admitted, however, that Great Britain desired to further the cause of emancipation throughout the world. This admission Calhoun presently made the text of long homilies for home effect in defence of slave institutions. It was quite in the line of Upshur's correspondence, but it disconcerted the President; for it put Texas annexation before the country, not as a plan for national benefit, but as a southern and special one, in the interest of slave-breeding.*

1843. December.

Before Calhoun took his seat in the cabinet, and even before the fatal explosion on board the "Princeton," which made the vacancy for him, this clandestine negotiation, which led the country up to the cannon's mouth without a word of warning or consultation, and in utter disregard of the rights of nations, began to get wind outside. The Washington correspondent of a New York press late in February was the first to mention the rumor, which the public could scarcely believe. A few weeks earlier an open letter from Webster reiterated the ex-Secretary's views of the impolicy of annexation; and under the same inspiration, so it appears, Winthrop introduced resolutions of the same tenor in the House, while the Washington *Intelligencer* sounded an alarm in some vigorous editorials.† The news that a treaty which joined Texas to the United States was ready for the final signatures startled the country like a cannonade. There was a panic in the New York exchange, as though war with Mexico had been declared already. The *Madisonian*, Tyler's official organ, would neither confirm nor deny the exciting report; but in the Richmond *Enquirer* was printed a letter from Andrew Jackson,

Jan. 23.

March.

March 23.

* See 2 Benton, 585, 589; 2 Tyler.

† See 2 Curtis's Webster, 231.

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which he wrote nearly a year before in favor of Texas annexation;* and that newspaper, with the *Globe*, took up a warm espousal of the cause on general principles. As a checkmate, the Massachusetts legislature set the example of resolutions which protested violently that the constitution gave no permission to join a foreign state to the American Union. Speculators in Texas lands and scrip jobbed with the cotton enthusiasts, and the missionary cause of "reannexation," so artfully misnamed, spread like wildfire through the far South, while the North looked on with just consternation. A new issue was sprung upon our politics on the very eve of the Presidential battle,—an issue strong enough to rend asunder the whole plan of campaign. John Tyler had played his last stake with utter want of principle, but with an address and intrepidity which forced those who had disparaged his talents to think better of them.

And yet by the time the Houston treaty was published, so decided had been the national expression against the stealth and perfidy, not to add the assumption of power, on Tyler's part, that failure of the project in its present shape was certain; for far from the confident two-thirds in the Senate it could not command a majority. The President submitted his Texas treaty on the 22d of April, with a confidential message in defence of it; the communication was printed and sent broadcast through the press before the Senate had decided to dispense with secrecy. And when, in response to a call from the House, military and naval orders were disclosed which showed the audacious Executive plunging his country into annexation and war at one stroke, the President, instead of riding the crest of national popularity, came near being impeached.

April.

May.

Both parties were agreed that Tyler should not win the

* See 3 Parton's Jackson, 653, 658; 2 Tyler's Tyler. Jackson's letter was printed, through mistake, as of Feb. 12, 1844, instead of 1843.

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stakes for himself. And while his reward was not unlike
1844. that of the Roman betrayer, to be crushed under the shields of those for whom the breach was made, he accomplished his secondary object, to wound the leading candidates. It was a bombshell to Clay and Van Buren, who had marshalled their ranks full of courtesy to one another.* Clay, indeed, had advised his friends to the last moment to shun this question, for which reason Winthrop's House resolution was laid aside. In vain would Webster have committed the Whigs against annexation: Webster, who replied, when New Hampshire friends sounded him upon his aspirations, that the nomination for President was neither to be sought nor declined.† Webster's wounds were too fresh to permit him to be bold. Clay ere this had absorbed the Whigs, and their fervor to fight under him was the party inspiration. Other policies had failed, that of a National Bank among them; but the new tariff had proved a success, or, at least, the returning prosperity was so great under it that Whigs and Democrats agreed not to disturb it, and the country was well satisfied.‡

While the Whigs had been uniting upon their candidate
1843. the Democrats were dividing; Van Buren's grip upon his party was still the strongest. The voice of the Hermitage was for him still. But there was much latent opposition to him, and some argued fairly that his day had passed, and that any President defeated for reelection in an open field ought to stand aside like the Adamses. New candidates had presented themselves: Cass, who had returned from France with some plaudits for opposing the "right of search" for slaves, and Buchanan; be-

* Van Buren partook of Clay's hospitalities while on a western tour in 1842.

† 65 Niles, 371; 2 Curtis's Webster, 231. Webster finally requested his friends not to present his name at the convention and announced that he would support the candidate.

‡ Cong. Debates. In May, 1844, low-tariff men of the South could not persuade this strongly Democratic House to take action on the subject, which was laid on the table by 105 to 99.

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sides that veteran, Richard M. Johnson, who announced himself willing to stand for President or Vice-President. Benton's friends occupied the background; and last of all, James K. Polk was modestly mentioned for the second office. While both parties repelled John Tyler, Calhoun's ambition was equally unable to catch the breeze, and so uncertain seemed the attitude of the latter that the Whigs once had hopes of gaining him as an ally.* But whoever the Democratic candidate, the Democrats felt the need of standing united; and in response to the catechism of one of the State conventions in 1843, Van Buren, Cass, Buchanan, and Johnson, each of these party candidates, had pledged himself in writing to abide by the result of a national party convention; and even Calhoun, though protesting that he was no candidate, replied to the same effect.† At that time Texas was not on the list of questions at all. 1844.

The Whig national convention was already announced to meet at Baltimore in May, 1844. Van Buren's friends would have had the Democratic convention held five months earlier, but his rivals had been favored by the southern undercurrent, and it was postponed until after that of the Whigs. All this made the Whigs very sanguine of success. Ohio, Maryland, Georgia, and the city of Philadelphia had given their cause encouragement. But to carry New York State, which was still Democratic, though loosely held, this remained the problem. Here a feud had broken out in the Democracy over a question of revising the State constitution; the more radical and progressive members of the party styled their conservative opponents "old hunkers," while they in turn were called "barnburners."‡ But notwithstanding the factional quarrels here, which were constant, Silas Wright proved strong enough in his party to be re-elected United States senator without any serious opposition. 1844. May. 1843. Oct.–Nov.

* 1 Crittenden, 207.

† 64 Niles, 164, 188.

‡ Seward's Life.

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The name of "barnburners" appears to have originated in a late Rhode Island rebellion, where the Dorrites were said to have plotted incendiary fires after their failure in open fight. That rebellion covered a space of about two years under Tyler's administration. It was a popular uprising, though an illegal one, against a government too aristocratic for the age. Of all the United States, Rhode Island, the last and most reluctant of the old thirteen to enter the Union, was the latest to preserve a royal charter as the basis of fundamental law. Under that charter, which seemed a liberal one when Charles II. granted it, the right of suffrage had been confined to freeholders of land and their eldest sons for nearly two hundred years. All petitions from the people praying to extend that right had been unavailing. Finally a revolutionary committee of disqualified voters undertook in 1841 to establish a new constitution regardless of legal forms. Their claim was that fundamental authority in every American free State resided in the people. They called a convention to meet in October; and to thwart their plans the legal legislature of Rhode Island summoned for November another and a later one to be chosen by the freeholders. Both conventions assembled, the one at Providence and the other at Newport, and each adopted a new State constitution which yielded the election franchise in favor of the people. But the legal or landholders' constitution when submitted to vote was rejected by the privileged voters, while the illegal or people's constitution was accepted, so to speak, by the unprivileged and unqualified voters regardless of the existing legislature and civil authorities and in defiance of them. Both parties proceeded separately in the spring to elect new State officers and a legislature; the free-suffrage party supporting for governor Thomas W. Dorr, a college graduate and a man of popular manners, belonging to a wealthy and influential family in the State. Governor King was re-elected under the old charter by the law

1841–43.

1841. September.

October.

November.

1842.

1842. April.

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and order party, while the Dorrites claimed success on their theory that their new constitution had extended the right of suffrage. Both legislatures met nearly simultaneously at the opposite ends of the State; at Newport, the one capital, King was inducted governor; at Providence, the other capital, Dorr took the oath. Rhode Island divided in allegiance between the old and new, collision and bloodshed were threatened, but Governor King had before the election sent out a warning proclamation, on the advice of the legislature, fortifying his position by a letter from President Tyler, which, though conciliating in its tone, took the side of the charter and the old-established authorities. It was the first time a President had been asked to intervene, under the sanction of the federal constitution, where domestic violence in a State took the character of rival claims to office; and Tyler's action was not only circumspect, but upon sound interpretation of the law. The garrison was increased in the fort at Newport, the Secretary of War was sent to the scene with instructions suited to the emergency. All this disheartened the Dorr faction, which had been enlisting a force in the neighboring States to fight for the new constitution and the sovereignty of the people. Not a blow was struck; Dorr, after once absconding to avoid arrest and then returning, fled a second time on the approach of the State militia; his troops dwindling away when they knew the national arms were against them. Public opinion, however, exerted its influence for a peaceful reform. A new State convention was regularly called by authority of the legal legislature, the non-voting citizens were allowed to send delegates to it; and a new constitution based upon a liberal extension of the suffrage such as the Dorrites had sought by violence was proposed by that convention and heartily adopted. Under that constitution Fenner was elected governor the following spring, and little Rhode Island gloried in the triumph of liberty protected by law. Dorr, on his return to Providence soon after, was arrested as a traitor, tried, convicted, and sentenced to imprisonment for life.

May.

April.

June.

1843. April.

1844.

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But public opinion pardoned the spirit of liberty, and Dorr's release was granted the next year under an amnesty act of the legislature.*

1845.

Another State disturbance occurred at this period as an heirloom of royal dominion in centuries gone by, which hindered the free expansion of our people. This was the "patroon war" of New York. Up the valley of the Hudson early Dutch settlers had procured large grants of land which they held as lords of the manor. That same system was recognized by the British crown after its conquest, and through the colonial period, and finally confirmed in part by an act of the New York legislature passed at the close of the Revolution. Some of the choicest settlements in the State were heavily burdened with that pompous tenure as the population spread. The old patroons had let their lands on perpetual lease, with irksome reservations in favor of themselves and their heirs; one condition, for instance, requiring a quarter part of the consideration-money to be paid them whenever a transfer was made. The great manor of Rensselaerwyck, near Albany, lying on both sides of the Hudson River, was the chief seat of the "anti-rent" disturbances which now broke out, though in some other localities of the State the same oppressive tenure made the same trouble. When the great patroon died,—Stephen Van Rensselaer,—who was once reputed the richest man in America, large arrears were found due under these leases; his heirs, more tenacious of right than he had been, tried to collect them, but the tenants resisted. Being pushed by process, these anti-renters formed secret associations for their own lawless but not irrational ends; they posted armed patrols, and would sometimes sally out disguised as Indians to waylay officers who came to serve writs upon them. One sheriff who came upon his unpleasant mission was assaulted by a mob who threatened him with tar and feathers; and crimes

1787.

* 62, 67, and 68 Niles, and various newspapers of the day; 2 Tyler, 194; President's special message, April 9, 1844. Dorr was at first obstinate and indisposed to ask for clemency, and friends appealed in vain to the federal courts for his release on *habeas corpus*.

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more heinous were laid at their door. From 1840 down through many years these disorders continued, and governors of the State, Whig and Democrat by turn, were perplexed how to deal with them. This very year of a Presidential election, while prisoners at Hudson were awaiting trial for murder, the anti-renters held secret meetings to plan a rescue from jail, and Governor Bouck had to order out a militia force to help the sheriff perform his duty. These defiers of the law, to speak the truth, were not vigorously dealt with, for they organized for political effect and created a sort of popular sympathy in their favor; but so violent were their methods, and so difficult was the underlying problem of land title to adjust, that the legislature refrained from giving the relief they desired.* 1840-47. 1844.

The bomb of Texas annexation exploded just in time to take effect upon the two great nominating conventions and their platforms. Clay, whose discourse while on a canvassing tour through the south-western States had been on other themes, was forced to declare himself. He prepared a letter which he submitted to his confidential friends, very sanguine that he could reconcile North and South to his views.† He reached Washington by the latter part of April, on his way to Kentucky; and on the next day his letter, which was dated from Raleigh, appeared in the *National Intelligencer*. That same afternoon, by a strange coincidence, a letter from his courteous foeman, Van Buren, on the same subject, long and discreet, was printed in the *Globe*. Both letters opposed the immediate annexation of Texas.‡ 1844. April. April 26-27.

* Newspapers of the day; Jenkins's Silas Wright; E. P. Cheney's Anti-Rent Agitation.

† 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 207, 217, 219; 11 Adams's Diary, 449.

‡ See 66 Niles. It looked as if these great leaders, who had blocked out the campaign so amicably as their own, concerted together to hurl Tyler and his firebrand out of the path and keep their own course.

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On the 1st of May, four days after the appearance of Clay's letter, the Whigs met at Baltimore, every State in the Union being represented. Judge Ambrose Spencer, of New York, was the presiding officer. Never was a convention more unanimous in the choice of its Presidential candidate; Henry Clay was the nominee by acclamation and amid deafening applause. On a third ballot, Theodore Frelinghuysen, of New Jersey, a man of probity and benevolence, who had served in the Senate, was selected for Vice-President from a list of worthy names, such as Fillmore, Sergeant, and John Davis. The platform was Clay's own, enunciating his principles on the national currency, the tariff, land distribution, and hostility to Executive usurpation; it ignored Tyler and avoided all direct expression either on Texas or a National Bank. One day completed the work; and next in that good Whig city assembled a young men's Whig convention, the greatest political assembly of the kind then known, which ratified these nominations after the rousing fashion of 1840, with shouts and hurrahs, splendid speeches from orators like Webster, Clayton, Berrien, and Reverdy Johnson, and an enormous procession. Webster was the favorite; and never, not even in old Faneuil Hall, did he receive a louder and heartier greeting than on the open ground this bright and sunny day, when, after pledging his loyal support of the ticket, he announced that the Whigs were to do over again the work of 1840, "and to do it now, God willing, so that it will hold."

May 1.

May 2.

Clay's letter, which took the true posture for a Whig, gave his convention short notice; but Van Buren, after committing himself, had to run the gauntlet for a whole month. On this Texas question the Democrats were certainly divided. Van Buren's star declined from the moment his Texas letter appeared; the Virginia delegates withdrew

But I am assured by the custodian of the Van Buren papers that there was no such concert, and certainly there are no proofs to support that theory. Letter of William A. Butler, May 23, 1888.

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their pledge of support; and the southern annexationists, who were in deadly earnest, began turning to Cass, to Johnson, to other candidates who were bidding eagerly for their favor by taking their side on the Texas question. The hero being appealed to, made confusion worse by reiterating that Texas ought to be annexed immediately, now or never, but at the same time upholding Van Buren, whose letter he excused as premature and written without full knowledge of the facts. Van Buren had, indeed, expressed himself ready to bow to the will of the people, and Jackson was not disposed to flatter his earnestness. Such was the turmoil of sentiment when the Democrats held their appointed convention, whose probable outcome no one could guess. It met at Baltimore, the convention city of these days, and held session three days. The balloting for President was long and eager. Van Buren led the list, firmly supported by his own State, but the adoption of the two-thirds rule, after a protracted struggle, was the first step to his defeat. Of seven ineffectual ballots he received the majority; but his vote was gradually passing to Cass, who had been sustained by Virginia's delegates from the start. The eighth ballot, taken on the morning of the third day and after an important night conference, revealed a new candidate in James K. Polk, of Tennessee. The New York and Virginia delegates ceased their variance to unite upon him; and though pledged to annexation already, the new man carried the convention almost unanimously on the ninth ballot. To appease Van Buren's friends, whose grief was great, Silas Wright, of New York, was nominated for Vice-President; but he declined at once, and George M. Dallas, of Pennsylvania, was his substitute. With a platform somewhat vague on the tariff question, but commending Van Buren's presidential record, approving whatever exercise of the veto power had prevented the re-establishment of a National Bank, disapproving land distribution, and boldly proclaiming in one breath reoccupation of Oregon and the reannexation of Texas as the great measures of the hour, this convention completed its work and dissolved. It was

May 27–29.

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the first time that this nominating machinery, which custom seems to regard as an essential medium of popular expression, had worked out the algebraic sum by the unknown quantity.* Benton, who had taken strong anti-Texas ground, was forever disgusted with this convention monstrosity of American politics, while Calhoun, as long as he lived, challenged the authority of these self-constituted bodies to speak as oracles of the people.†

On the same day with this gathering of the Democracy, and in another hall of the same city, met Tyler's convention. It was a travesty upon these other conventions, being composed chiefly of the rag-tag adventurers and placemen whose slogan was "Tyler and Texas," played off by the New York custom-house, whose Whig collector had just been turned out for the good of the cause. Not Calhoun himself, much as he wished for Texas annexation, would lift a finger to help the mercenaries, who worked hard with this patent-right of a policy to force Tyler's name upon the other convention while the latter was at sea for a candidate, or break it to pieces by drawing in some of its delegates. By Tyler's convention, which was a family affair, he was nominated for President on his platform of immediate annexation; but no one was named for Vice-President; these spurious Democrats adjourned while the legitimates were quarrelling. The upshot was not what the President had desired or expected. Hardly had the Democrats settled their quarrel and adjourned when his letter of acceptance came out as though to forestall and warn off infringers. "Let Polk

May 27-28.

May 30.

* 2 Statesman's Manual; 66 Niles; 2 Benton, 585, 626.

† 66 Niles, 98; 1 Benton, 373. Some have thought that Calhoun's influence was exerted in this convention to compel a pro-Texas platform and a pro-slavery candidate. See Seward's Life. George Bancroft has claimed, in conversation with the present writer, that he brought about Polk's nomination with the aid of the Massachusetts delegation, which had intended to support Polk for Vice-President. It was carried because he and many other delegates were convinced that Van Buren could not be nominated and Cass could not be elected. Polk's nomination was unexpected to him. Mem., April 1, 1887.

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withdraw," said the *Madisonian*, "or take the consequence of producing the division of a third party."*

These Democratic conventions are memorable for the transmission of their proceedings by electric telegraph. Congress having lately appropriated thirty thousand dollars† to test Morse's invention, a wire was run between Washington and Baltimore, and communication fully opened three days before.‡ Messages of congratulation had sped by this occult messenger, but the first practical use of the spark was to give Congress the news of these two conventions. Every half-hour the strange little machine at the east end of the capitol reported the progress of meetings held forty miles away, and written bulletins posted up on the wall of the rotunda gave quick intelligence of the news.§ Silas Wright was the first of mortal men to receive and decline a nomination by electric telegraph, and the event had its public bearing on affairs. A new social force was born of the nineteenth century,—the dissemination and collection of news on the instant. Jove's own messenger sped from this date for mankind. By another year plans were developed for extending the electric wires to New York and more distant points, making

* 66 Niles, 209; 2 Statesman's Manual; 2 Tyler. Tyler wrote privately, April 20: "Clay will most probably come out against Texas. If so he is a doomed man, and then Van Buren will seek to come in on Texas and my vetoes. For that we are ready to do battle." 2 Tyler, 307. In his public letter of April 30, accepting the nomination, he says: "My name has been inseparably connected with the great question of the annexation of Texas to the Union. In originating and concluding that negotiation I had anticipated the cordial co-operation of two gentlemen (Clay and Van Buren), both of whom were most prominent in the public mind as candidates for the Presidency. That co-operation would have been attended with the immediate withdrawal of my name from the question of the succession." 2 Tyler, 321.

† Act March 3, 1843.

‡ "What hath God wrought!" was the earliest message ever sent by the wire; the President and Chief-Justice had interchanged public compliments besides.

§ 12 Adams's Diary; newspapers of the day.

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great changes in the modes of journalism and business, and already were predicted electric lights, electric signals, and electric fire-alarms as future adaptations of this most magical and mysterious of natural agents.

Twelve days after these Baltimore conventions were over, the Senate voted on the Texas treaty, of which the President's message asserted that "no intrigue has been set out on foot to accomplish it." The opposition of Clay, Van Buren, and Benton, the general disapproval of the people besides, were fatal to it. Instead of the requisite two-thirds in its favor, there were more than two-thirds against it.* Some who voted against it admitted, however, that to annexation without cunning or underhand dealing towards Congress or Mexico they had no objection. Tyler next appealed to the House to originate some measure towards the same end. In the Senate, Benton moved a bill of his own for annexing Texas whenever Mexico should sanction the measure. The President was condemned by all parties. Tyler's friends have tried to impute the blame to the malign influence of Calhoun in making the whole policy seem subservient to the missionary spread of slavery.† Calhoun, on the other hand, who was greatly depressed in spirits, blamed himself for accepting office under a President who had no party strength, and had tried to annex at so unpropitious a time.‡

June 8. April. June 9, 10.

Congress closed an unprofitable session on the 17th of June. Pension appropriations were made, Jackson's fine at New Orleans was refunded,§ and the judiciary act of 1789 was amended. Upon river

June 17.

* The vote stood 35 to 16.

† In Calhoun's famous correspondence with Pakenham, the British minister, he claimed that every country was the rightful judge of its own relations with its own population. See Ex. Docs.; 66 Niles, etc.

‡ 4 Calhoun's Speeches.

§ President Tyler had made a great point of proposing this in his messages more than once.

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and harbor appropriations the President had shown his constitutional scruples by approving that for the West and vetoing that for the East. A Democratic House checked the Senate, and a Whig Senate checked the House; while the President checked the legislature, and was checked by that body in return.

The Presidential campaign which now began, though differing in some traits from that of 1840, was one to be long remembered. The fresh effervescence of the log-cabin days was thrown off by the Whigs like the foam of happy youth. Whig yeomen mounted their coon-skin caps again, and "that same old coon," sitting on a rail, or making his midnight prowl, was something still of a Whig emblem; but the conflict raged too seriously for this humorous nonsense to gain much headway as the fight went on. It was chivalrous devotion to an illustrious statesman that gave this party a tonic such as it never tasted again. For the first and last time the party of great intellects trusted its cause to its greatest; and how they clung to Harry Clay and loved him on this, the last race of his ambition, no other age will appreciate until it produces his counterpart. Clay's sympathies were sincere and deep; his soul was bound up in the whole Union; and whatever blot or brightness shows on his escutcheon, we must recognize his patriotic effort through all his wayward emulation, and, as long as he lived, to knit the jarring sections firmly by indissoluble ties into the only national fabric which, in his day, seemed possible. Though surpassed in the separate endowments, no American statesman and legislator has ever equalled him in the triple combination of eloquence, personal influence, and creative power in legislation. He was a natural born leader of men, intelligent, brave, gallant, and magnanimous, even though sometimes overbearing,—a man without servility, and one who, had he been elected President in this campaign, would have administered the government, it is fair to believe, with ability and success, and averted the danger which hung heavy and black in the horizon. 1844.

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Never were the signs of Whig success more auspicious than when the canvass opened in May, and never did the sun go down on a sadder defeat. The Clay vocalists had prepared their songs to laugh down Van Buren, to rouse the Whigs for Ashland. Hearty was that strain,—

"Here's to you, Harry Clay;
Here's to you, my noble soul; here's to you, with all my heart!"

But what was this new, this unexpected apparition of a Polk? At first the Whigs ridiculed his nomination; few people had ever heard of him; and what was this creature of an accident that he should be matched against the statesman and orator of peerless renown? But it did not take long to discover that the Tennessee candidate possessed elements of strength by the very contrast he presented. Clay's long record of service showed the waywardness of a genius striving to lead and be popular, while Polk made no record but in the open grooves of his party; Clay had the eager pant and fire of a thoroughbred, while Polk had toiled like a faithful pack-horse; Clay sought distinction like a star, Polk had distinction thrust upon him, had taken the lower seat, and been asked to go higher; Clay's frailties endeared him to the frail; Polk, with his stern Presbyterian temper, pleased the moralists; Clay was brilliant and captivating, Polk safe and simple. But the most fatal point of difference was that the Whig nominee, in his anxiety to win, was disposed to define and redefine his position, while the other, whose nature was cautious and secretive, committed himself as little as possible, thereby inducing men of different views to imagine that what each wished would be brought about. On the tariff question their contrast was striking. Though a protectionist by his record, Clay hedged on his tariff views for southern effect.* Polk, in answering a letter which came from Pennsylvania, where both parties favored high

* See his explanatory letter in 65 Niles, 173.

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duties, authorized his name to be put on their banners with "protection, and the tariff of 1842," but otherwise was equivocal.*

The first electric glow of the Whigs, while all was dissension among their adversaries, did not last long. Party adhesion was amazingly strong among the Democrats; prejudice, habit, antipathy to the rule of wealth and scholarship, the ignoble passion of their recruiting sergeants for place, power, and even the pelf of the lesser offices,—all compelled to unity as the combat deepened. From such a party, with its discipline and soul of brotherhood, independents rarely break off. Of disappointed aspirants each pledged his adherence to the ticket; Old Hickory shouldered his crutch, dissensions were pacified, and the ranks closed up. John Tyler himself gave up the race and turned over his body-guard, delivering, as though it were a glorious act, the keys of the Whig fortress. He made the best terms he could when his re-election exploit gave out. His friends threatened to run a separate ticket in New York State; but the Democratic press, North and South, appealed to him to withdraw for the common good of the party. Tammany Hall at the same time August. passed resolutions which flattered him nearly to the top of his bent. Tyler was fain to take this as the vindication he had expected from the people; for instead of being praised as the father of Texas annexation, he was in danger of being left without a shred of the glory. He now withdrew from the canvass in a long and vainglorious letter. The Democrats meant no more than that he should march out with honors; in the sequel he showed himself offended because Polk ignored him in the spoils. But the whole affair was a delicate one and felt to be so; and Polk himself, and Jackson, who had acted as a mediator, avoided all appearance of a bargain. The Democrats bought off

* 67 Niles. Polk's "Kane letter," which was his only public avowal on the tariff, looked towards a protective tariff, and yet was cautiously worded so as not to give umbrage to free-traders. In this respect it was like the Democratic platform on this subject.

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the mischievous vanity of the President at the lowest cost.*

By autumn the battle waxed hot and eager in the numerical hunt. The victory was plainly seen to be a close one. Every sign of a gaining or decreasing party vote in the State elections which followed one after another was proclaimed and tabulated. There were banner States and banner counties, and one party would try to out-brag the other over the thousands in mass-meetings and the miles of processions. The Whig canvass surged about the figure of the gallant Clay, whose plumed crest rose and fell, but moved incessantly. Van Buren loco-focoism was already fading out. "The Democracy of the North," proclaimed the Richmond *Enquirer*, "are the natural allies of the South." Personalities were interchanged in this canvass, forged letters were put into circulation; against Clay was revived the stale "bribery and corruption" charge; and against Polk the celebrated "Roorback" canard that a gang of Tennessee slaves had been met on their way to the southern market with the initials "J. K. P." branded on their persons.† In a few popular cities like Philadelphia and New York, feuds had been fomenting between Protestants and the Irish Catholics; and a native-American movement distracted the canvass.‡ But a diversion far more dangerous was that of anti-slavery radicals in the northern frontier States. The "Liberty party" had been revived at Buffalo the year before and nominated James G. Birney once more for President on a platform of agitation.§ With the Texas issue to stir the moral philanthropists, it became more and more probable as the canvass went on that New York would decide the election, and that in New York this party held the balance of power.

1843. August 30.

* Observe the tenor of Jackson's letters in 2 Tyler, 338, 341, etc.; also the animus shown to Polk by the Tyler family.

† 67 Niles; 2 Tyler; 66 Niles.

‡ 66 Niles. Philadelphia this year was the scene of bloody riots of somewhat the same sort as the "no-Popery" tumults to which the Puseyite movement in the English Church gave rise.

§ *Supra*, p. 342.

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Agitators like these were not likely to take the plan most feasible for accomplishing their ends, for they could not co-operate; they would open the gates to the enemy for the sake of mortifying the friends they disliked. One slaveholder or another must needs be the next President; and Birney, who took the stump, avowed his preference for the candidate of the Democrats, because Polk had no talent and would be powerless, while Clay, being both talented and powerful, would thwart the friends of freedom.*

Thus is it the men who profess to vote for a principle will bring in the very men most hostile to the principle. So exacting were these "Liberty party" men that John Quincy Adams was not anti-slavery enough to suit them.† But the root-and-branch abolitionists, more consistent, did not care to vote at all. They scorned national office because the officer had to take his oath to support the slave-tainted constitution; and indeed our Anti-Slavery Society this same momentous year resolved, as Garrison and Phillips induced them to do, that abolitionists should make it a prime object of their agitation to dissolve the Union, that secession was their duty because to vote was to abet sin. Was it possible for any national party of loyal citizens to please such zealots? Adams, Giddings, and Seward, on the other hand, all anti-slavery statesmen, upheld Clay as the last hope, and a strong one, for checking the annexation passion of the South. Anti-slavery men were the natural allies of the northern Whigs and reconciled the anti-slavery idea as long as possible with the logic of the federal constitution.

1844. May.

We cannot wonder that Clay, with his strong national spirit, disliked the abolitionists. No slaveholder among public men of his age tried so much to pacify the humane sentiment of the Union; but his path was between two fires. In his own section he was reproached as an abolitionist because he still hoped for final emancipation and

* 67 Niles; newspapers of the day.

† Adams came in for a share of Birney's censure, and a "Liberty party" candidate ran for his seat in Congress. 12 Adams's Diary.

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had favored in the Senate the right of petition; and his kinsman, Cassius M. Clay, who had just freed his slaves and favored practical abolition, was quoted as his son. At the North abolitionists held him up to execration as the friend of slavery. Texas supplied already the burning issue; in South Carolina most of all, whence Samuel Hoar had just been expelled for coming as counsel for Massachusetts to defend colored citizens who were imprisoned, "Texas and southern rights" was the rallying cry, and here were heard ominous threats of a southern convention and dissolution of the American Union should their present movement fail. For polling a vote in both sections and through the entire land Clay was stronger than his party; but the weakness of his present position lay in the equivocal stand he took, with his party behind him. Texas annexation the Whigs opposed not so much for downright anti-slavery reasons as on other less positive grounds which might prove temporary. This issue, nevertheless, which had been sprung of a sudden, was sharp, well-defined, positive; one had to confront it as it was, with slavery extension for a consequence, and not upon any hypothesis of freedom. Clay's earnestness to explain, to please both sides, was fatal to him. He trusted too much to his skill of expression, forgetting that votes are won in such a contest when the voter is left free to imagine. The campaign had scarcely opened before graceful letters from his fluent pen, some of them confidential, began to appear in the press, which, although honest and true, annoyed his friends and interrupted the harmony of the canvass. The Democrats made sport of this propensity and would herald each new epistle with a flourish of attention. No material injury was done, however, until his "Alabama letters" appeared, the second and more imprudent of them in September; and in these he tried to define his position on the Texas question so as to assure southern friends that he was not courting the abolitionists. His Raleigh or platform letter against immediate annexation,* well conceived

* *Supra*, p. 465.

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as it was, had not pleased slaveholders of the Gulf States, and summer elections in that region went adversely. This he could not have helped any more than he could have taken the glory of "reannexation" from the Democratic banners, and as for Alabama, that State had never chosen, nor was likely to choose, a single Whig elector. Clay's second Alabama letter, when read as a whole, did not change the position he had taken already, but it gave an impression of weakness; slavery, it argued, ought to have nothing to do with the admission or non-admission of Texas. He used here, besides, a most unfortunate expression, which, taken without the context, worked the Whigs irreparable injury. If the annexation of Texas (so ran this letter) could be accomplished without dishonor, without a war with Mexico, and with the common consent of the Union, he "should be glad to see it." These last words were caught up in an instant and changes were rung incessantly upon them by the opposition press and orators for the rest of the canvass. Henry Clay opposed to the annexation of Texas? No; he says he "should be glad to see it." The Birney papers were even more vehement: "We told you so; Henry Clay in his heart is like all other slaveholders; he would be glad to see Texas annexed, and he admits that he does not care whether slavery is voted up or down." These Alabama letters cost Clay dearly at the North, where strong anti-slavery Whigs had been electioneering for him on the strength of his first expressions, arguing, with good reason, that a Whig triumph was a sure means, and the only one practicable, for preventing the Texas annexation. Perceiving his mistake, Clay wrote not less than three new letters for northern effect before the October elections, to prove that he had not varied in the slightest from his Raleigh sentiments,* but it was too late. The Polk presses reviewed with scathing levity his "six Texas manifestoes," while many of those who still idolized Clay felt like one of their number who said afterwards that the only qualification he should ask of

September.

October.

* See 66 Niles, 439; 2 Tyler, chap. 12; Buell's Giddings, 155.

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a candidate in the future would be that he could neither read nor write.*

As the crisis approached, victory was felt to turn on the vote of a few large States, and probably of New York alone. The preliminary State elections and party skirmishes all showed that the solid Whig column was seriously broken; and that of the States which had once united for Harrison, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, were all lost, and worst of all, Pennsylvania, whose statesmen led her to vacillate between high tariff and Jacksonism. The Keystone State chose a Democratic governor, while in Ohio the Whigs, as a cheering offset, made a sweep such as they had not made for seven years. All eyes turned to New York, where, as in Michigan, the abolition and floating vote was large enough to turn the scale. The Democrats of the Empire State had unexpectedly harmonized their differences by uniting upon Silas Wright, the sturdy friend of Van Buren, who consented to run for governor, though he had refused his name for Vice-President and felt at heart opposed to Texas. Democrats of his school and presses like the New York *Evening Post* published their intention to support Polk and Dallas, while opposing reannexation. State and national officers were here to be chosen on the same day. The Whigs inclined to Seward as their standard-bearer, but he hung back, and Fillmore was nominated governor instead. But while Fillmore was in better line with the Clay Whigs, Seward was the man whom the nationals leaned upon, and heavily, too, to make their cause palatable to the floating elements. Seward, with singleness, zeal, and sincerity, supported Clay, but he could not and would not commit himself to an equivocal Texas platform as the true one, nor accept the full task allotted him.† At last came the fateful November; Penn-

1844.

October.

* Wm. Schouler's Recollections, No. 39 (1870).

† Seward's Biography, 760. Seward does not seem to have favored Clay heartily as a candidate; and his speeches, though logical and persuasive, had not the ring of confident enthusiasm.

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sylvania and Ohio led into the fight on the first day, the former for Polk and the latter for Clay; on Monday, the 4th, half the States voted; on Tuesday, November. the 5th, four more, and among them Louisiana and New York. Louisiana, the Whigs asserted afterwards, was carried for Polk and Dallas by foul frauds perpetrated in Plaquemines parish, but this was of less consequence, for the same day's loss of New York decided the national contest against them. And yet that preponderating State with its thirty-six electors was won for the Democrats by only 5000 plurality out of a vote which aggregated nearly 500,000; and here the Liberty party alone cast about 16,000, mostly in the strong Whig counties west of Cayuga bridge; and had these Birney votes, or even half of them, been given to Clay, the Whigs would have won the State; and with the State, Henry Clay would have been chosen President by seven electoral votes against his opponent.*

No defeat, if a final one, is so hard to bear as that which might have been a victory. A few States were left to vote the following week; and Massachusetts set a proud example of faithfulness to political principle by giving a splendid majority to the candidate who was known to be hopelessly defeated. It was Webster who had rallied the Whigs in Faneuil Hall on the same night that the New York results were spread abroad, with the speech which began with that magnificent quotation,—

"What though the field be lost, all is not lost."

Webster could not have owned to himself the Lucifer spirit when he uttered these words, but perhaps he did not grieve deeply over his rival's defeat, nor feel surprised. His campaign speeches, which certainly were very powerful in discussing Whig principles, alluded so little to the Whig candidates, that many remarked that he was speaking for himself and his cause and not for the present

* See Electoral Tables, appendix. Polk, on the final reckoning, had 170 votes to Clay's 105.

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ticket.* With his tenderer faults of character, Clay, despite his follies, had held firmly the mild border States, and controlled good minorities in Virginia and various other southern States whose present tide was against him; and besides his own Kentucky, as a minor trophy he had carried the State of Polk and Andrew Jackson.

The popular vote in the aggregate was very close.† That conservative force of this great American Union which was to be a saving grace through coming years owed most to Clay's name and influence. He bore his defeat, terrible though it must have been, with manful dignity. Almost mechanically, in the moment of disaster, his sanguine spirit reached forward to new plans, new fields; but his heart was crushed: it was too late a day. His talisman was broken; the coming work belonged to a new race of warriors. He had lost the one golden opportunity of life's ambition. Once more, and but once, in a momentous crisis projected by the present defeat, we shall see the old enchanter touch the robe of events with something of his former magic; but his star paled from the sky, and to the Whigs, many of whom lost all further interest in politics, there rose up never such a leader again.

Congress reassembled for its final task with a full quorum; the Democrats, of course, jubilant, the Whigs depressed and despondent, Birney's party scarcely beginning to realize the prodigious error they had committed. The first act of the session was to abolish by common consent the scattering system of Presidential balloting which had compelled Massachusetts to take the field after the battle was decided; and a uniform day, namely, the Tuesday following the first Monday of November, was established as the time for holding all future Presidential elections throughout the Union.‡ In the House the dominant party showed a better feeling towards

Dec. 2.

1844–45.

* Wm. Schouler's Recollections, No. 38 (1870).

† Polk's plurality over Clay in the entire Union was but little more than 38,000 in a popular vote of nearly 2,700,000.

‡ Act January 23, 1845.

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the abolitionists, who had done them such signal service, and before the President's message could be read, December. John Quincy Adams carried the repeal of the "gag rule" as a reward of his long perseverance.* Wise, who had led the fight against these northern petitioners, had now departed, and without debate Adams's motion prevailed.† "Blessed be the name of God!" was Adams's ejaculation, and upon an ivory cane which had Dec. 3. been presented to him with an unfinished inscription he had this date engraved and made a gift of it to the government.‡ This was the third and last triumph of the old man, whose leadership now ended, though his presence was felt years longer; and it was a pleasure to him that this same winter the legislature of Ohio rescinded the resolutions which had censured him three years before for presenting the Haverhill petition. But his was a triumph of personal example, more than a practical and solid one. In later times the House petition-box, like the Chinese prayer-wheel, makes a mechanism of all memorials, that the public business may move faster, which always moves slowly enough, and even now the slaveholders, though quite good-humored, had no idea of abating a hair in favor of these petitioners. They only abandoned their spiked cannon in order to take up a more impregnable position. This same month that Adams carried his point a December. petition was presented for abolition with recompense to master, and the House, laying it summarily on the table, would not so much as refer it to a committee. And this very same Democratic House, aided by the remnant of a Whig Senate in which sat neither Clay nor Webster, took in this brief session the most critical step but one towards the consummation of slavery's bloody fate. Texas annexation was hurried to its sanction before a new Congress, however favorable, could sit upon the question.

* This rule had been rescinded at the first session and then retained upon reconsideration by a close vote, the southerners sending out for absentees.

† By 108 to 80.

‡ See 12 J. Q. Adams's Diary; 67 Niles.

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What haste, what visible eagerness was here to turn quickly the wheels of manifest destiny! Perfidy to Mexico no longer seemed an objection. This phantom of British intervention, of the world's commercial missionary, squatting close to Texas and persuading her to abolish, our southern brethren could bear no longer; quick, or by another year that wavering republic might be independent and free, propped stealthily up by European influence, as a counterpoise and check to slavery expansion. British wishes leaned, most probably, in that direction, but a British ministry was neither bold nor intriguing enough to lead up to the hazard of war on any such issue. Calhoun exaggerated the alarm in his section, after Lord Aberdeen had assured him honestly enough that England would neither interfere nor protest.* Words are things to the sensitive mind, and in the very word "reannexation" Americans saw themselves dispossessed of that which by right belonged to them. But reannexation was an illusion, and in the sense that we had ever surrendered that unbounded territory which now called itself Texas it was a palpable fraud. Jackson, who had expressed such public regret that Texas had been left out of the treaty with Spain in 1819, was convicted by his own record.† After their victory at the polls the voice of the people seemed to the Democrats the voice Divine; and now that they pressed their measure, the Whigs, unnerved and broken, were more timid than ever about opposing it on its true, meritorious grounds. It was unconstitutional, they argued, for Congress to annex a foreign republic; but after the precedents of Louisiana and Florida such a scruple could weigh little.

Seward in a recent campaign speech urged the true objection to Texas, not very different, in truth, from that which had weighed with President Monroe a quarter-century before. Texas and slavery were at war with the

* See 2 Tyler, 333; 66 Niles, 280.

† See vol. iii, p. 97; 67 Niles, 343; 12 Adams's Diary, 131, concerning the issue of veracity between the two ex-Presidents, the last issue they ever joined.

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common interests and involved the integrity of the Union. "To increase the slaveholding power is to subvert the constitution; to give a fearful preponderance which may and probably will be speedily followed by demands to which the democratic free-labor States cannot yield and the denial of which will be made the ground of secession, nullification, and disunion." Most fellow-Whigs thought the prediction at this time an extravagant one, but events established it.*

Nothing more was heard of impeachment, nothing remained of Democratic objections to the course John Tyler had taken on this question, except to substitute the action of Congress for secret and underground initiation at the White House. To such a substitute the President gracefully conformed. The ordeal of public opinion, he now contended, had shown that Texas ought to be annexed to the American Union at once.† Calhoun, the Secretary, who had been so much dejected the past summer over the affair that he came near leaving the cabinet,‡ rallied his spirits and plied the argument of British intrigues with all the effect possible. Without much personal harmony between them, the retiring President and his premier moved in the same direction. Congress took up annexation with a zest. In the Senate, McDuffie, and in the House, Charles J. Ingersoll, offered a joint resolution for annexing Texas; each resolution was duly referred. After the holidays the subject was earnestly debated in the House; many southern Whigs favoring the measure, while northern men insisted on modifying the Ingersoll resolutions so that the Missouri compromise line should be run through the proposed territory. This a Democratic caucus accepted, and the joint resolution as amended passed the House near the close of January by a majority of 22 votes.§

Dec. 9–12.

1845. January.

Jan. 25.

* Seward's Life, 727. † President's Annual Message, Dec. 1844.

‡ 2 Tyler's Tyler, 415. South Carolina's electoral vote was cast for Polk and Dallas, and Calhoun had taken no interest in the Tyler convention at Baltimore.

§ Cong. Debates; 67 Niles, 350. An analysis of this vote (which stood 120 to 98) showed 112 Democrats in favor of the resolution with

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In the Senate the fight was longer and more stubborn, because of the doubtful stand taken by Benton and the Van Buren loco-focos, whose leader had gone to the wall. Benton had promptly introduced his bill of the previous session, providing for the annexation of Texas with the consent of Mexico, or without it whenever Congress should deem such assent unnecessary.

1844. December.

But he soon found himself compelled to take another step or be left behind. Wishing to checkmate this hybrid administration at all hazards and pass the whole subject over to the next President and Congress as chosen agents of the public will, he proposed, February 5th, a new bill, with a speech highly complimentary to Polk. This bill said nothing of the consent of Mexico, but it acknowledged the right of Congress to annex in two different ways: by providing a mission to negotiate terms, either to be submitted to the Senate and ratified as a treaty, or to the two Houses as articles to be jointly passed upon. A majority in the Senate was hopeless to be found unless Benton's set could be gained over. At length, Robert J. Walker, of Mississippi, a strong annexationist, who was about to enter the cabinet of the new President, proposed to unite the two plans, the House plan and Benton's, and give the President power to choose between them. Benton caught at this expedient, and both wings thus united, the Senate, by a bare majority, passed the joint resolution in this amended form.* It was a signal triumph for slave propagation.

1845. February.

Feb. 5.

Feb. 27.

Among northern senators who voted for this direful bill with the Walker alternative were Buchanan and Woodbury, besides three who had been lately seated, John A.

8 southern Whigs; also 70 Whigs against it with 28 northern Democrats. The House resolution in its final shape borrowed the draft proposed by Milton Brown, a Whig member from Tennessee.

* The vote stood 27 to 25. Benton showed himself inconsistent, for against an appeal not to "kill his own child," he joined in voting down the bill he had proposed in December. 68 Niles; Debates of Congress; 2 Tyler, 362.

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Dix, Daniel S. Dickinson, and David R. Atchison. The last-named, a Missourian of Kentucky birth, was Benton's new colleague; both Dix and Dickinson entered national life together in this dignified branch of the legislature, chosen recently by the New York legislature to fill the unexpired terms of Silas Wright and Tallmadge. Rufus Choate, of Massachusetts, the orator of haggard and Oriental aspect, whose brilliant speech against the bill was long remembered, had declined a re-election, never more to cast his pearls before a Congressional audience. Webster had been chosen to succeed him in March; and Lewis Cass, for the first time, was to enter the Senate from Michigan at the same date. Merrick, of Maryland, and Henry Johnson, of Louisiana, both Whig senators, who had voted the past summer against the Tyler treaty, now recorded their votes for annexation by the Congressional channel. Archer, Bayard, Berrien, Crittenden, and Rives, among men of the same section, recorded their negative.

Pending the final disposition of this measure the whole Union was agitated. Crowds besieged the Senate daily to listen to the debate, and foreign legations as well as the cabinet were represented among the listeners. Nor were State legislatures silent in expressing their views. The legislature of Massachusetts took the Whig ground that no constitutional right nor precedent existed for admitting a foreign State by mere act of Congress, and protested in the name of the people against admitting Texas on any other basis than the perfect equality of freemen. But in those northern border States which had gone Democratic, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Maine, the legislatures chose rather to commend the annexation of Texas as a great national measure. Virginia refused to instruct her senators on the subject, while South Carolina was dictatorial.* Internal convulsions in Mexico at this very mo-

* 68 Niles; 2 Tyler, 861. "It is an insult to the South," declared the Charleston Mercury, "to keep Texas out of the Union," adding that the South were bound to have that State annexed, constitution or no constitution. And see the expressions at the public dinner given

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ment were an overpowering temptation to those who had wavered. Tyler's secret agents, who bore bribes in their hands and plausible explanations on their lips, had accomplished nothing with Santa Anna but to spur him on, with his republic, to subjugate Texas for her perfidy.* But just as Congress deliberated on the question came the news of a sudden revolution in Mexico which put Santa Anna under the wheel and Herrera at the top. Now was the time to clutch the prize, for we could secure it without a war; and this lying instigation sealed the book of fate.

1844. May.

1845. February.

When the Texas joint resolution came back to the House with the Senate amendment tacked to it, conscience Whigs made a last effort to load down the whole subject till the session expired. But the Benton alternative made the bill all the more palatable to northern and western Democrats, and the House quickly concurred by a larger majority than the measure had commanded in its original form.† On the last day of February, at sunset, both Houses had taken final action, and within twenty-four hours President Tyler affixed his approval. A hundred guns from the capitol announced the success of Texas annexation; but many a bloodier salute was fired before that success proved substantial.

Feb. 27–28.

March 1.

To glance for a moment at the meaning of this joint resolution. It not only consented to the erection of Texas into a State for admission into the Union with a republican form of government, but pledged the faith of the United

to Rhett, where the sentiments (complimentary to Calhoun and Rhett) were: "Annexation with the Union, if we can; without it, if we must," etc. 67 Niles, 26.

* 66 Niles, 349. Observe the seductive strain of the President's Message, December, 1844. Mexico, it argues, had been despoiled of nothing, since Texas was forever lost to her. The boundaries of Texas were, to be sure, undefined, but we would have settled them upon terms that all the world would pronounce just and reasonable. But are nations accustomed to sell out their boundary rights at the appraisal of "all the world"?

† The vote of concurrence stood 132 to 76.

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States to permit new States to be formed from that jurisdiction not exceeding four, besides Texas, should Texas assent to it, and to admit these additional States into the Union hereafter with or without slavery, as the people of each State might prefer, if formed below the Missouri compromise line of 36° 30′, but if formed above that line, without slavery at all. The tiger in the jungle of this fair territory was the adjustment of boundaries with Mexico; but we adopted Texas and her circumstances together, and distinctly assumed that difficult function. Any constitution formed by the people of Texas was to be laid before Congress for its final action by the first of January next. Such was the first and original branch of this joint resolution, embracing a consent under conditions given in advance, which the President might submit to the republic of Texas by way of an offer from the United States for immediate acceptance. But now, by force of the Benton alternative, the President might at his discretion negotiate with Texas clean terms of admission and submit the results hereafter.*

Only three days were left to round out Tyler's official term. The second thought of Congress had apparently been to commit this whole business, with its dread responsibilities, to the incoming President, whose sober reticence was confided in. Polk had already pledged himself to "immediate reannexation," but this was a question of methods, and even Jacksonians disliked to give Tyler credit for anything. Benton and the Van Burenites had a last hope that the second alternative would be chosen, and, in fact, Benton afterwards asserted that Polk privately promised to choose it. But Tyler was too slippery, too intent upon the prize of his calling, to be stripped thus of his glory. He improved the last hours of his opportunity, and with Calhoun, it appears, to second him. The discretion given under the resolve he at once exercised himself; he chose the first alternative, which was what zealous annexationists wanted, and invited Texas to accept the condi-

* Joint Resolution, March 1, 1845.

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tions and enter without further transactions.* Polk, perhaps, was willing to escape so easily the dilemma which the Democrats had arranged for him. He put upon this predecessor the odium of annexing Texas by the surest but most outrageous means, and Tyler, in return, put upon Polk the odium of handling consequences so that war with Mexico followed. On Monday, the last day of his term, and the same day that he vacated the White House, Tyler took the responsibility without a qualm, by despatching a nephew, who spurred off with hot speed, bearing with him the official despatches which tendered to the lone star republic the proposal of the United States for immediate union.†

March 3.

Meanwhile the present equipoise of slavery and freedom was maintained by an act of this Congress which authorized the admission of two new States together, Iowa and Florida; the one with freedom, the other with slavery.‡ Florida, whose fortress of St. Augustine was now the most ancient town in the Union, had suffered for seven years from the ravages of native Indians whom the national government undertook to remove beyond the Mississippi.§ Armed occupation by white settlers brought this bitter war to an end without a treaty or a signal pitched battle to mark its conclusion. In pursuance of this policy, land was offered free to such settlers on the condition of five years' residence;‖ they came and estab-

1835-42.

* 2 Tyler, 363. Tyler's biographer explains that, in doing this, Tyler was moved by no suspicion that Polk would have chosen the other alternative, but that he feared that even a slight delay would aid England's effort to induce Texas to accept peace on the basis of her separate independence. He says, too, that, Tyler's cabinet favoring immediate annexation, Secretary Calhoun called on the President-elect to submit the instructions he had prepared, but that Polk declined to interfere and his silence was taken for assent. Ib.

† 2 Tyler, 313; 2 Benton, 623, etc.; 68 Niles.

‡ Act March 3, 1845.

§ *Supra*, p. 320.

‖ See 2 Benton, 461; 2 Tyler, 192; Act August 4, 1842.

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lished a line of defence; some three hundred Seminoles, who had not sunk beneath the wave of slaughter, were allowed to reside within specified limits among the lower morasses of the peninsula. Dissensions among the inhabitants had furnished another long hindrance to Florida's admission, for many desired two separate States, as under the Spanish provincial division. These disputes at last buried, Florida now complied at once with the terms of admission. For many years this State was the feeblest of the whole sisterhood; but its present constitution, which ordained that slavery should be perpetual, could not last forever, and at last it unfolded its petals to bloom like the magnolia. Iowa was already prosperous, but the people rejected the present act of admission, chiefly because of the boundary line it laid off against slave-holding Missouri. In fact, this free State was not really enrolled in the Union until Texas, outstripping her, had been admitted a whole year.* 1845. April.

Two diplomatic achievements are to be named to complete the record of Tyler's administration. An extradition convention between France and the United States was signed in November, 1843, while Upshur was Secretary of State. In January, 1845, Caleb Cushing returned from his flying tour to China, having procured an advantageous treaty, which the Senate unanimously ratified. The great object of that interesting mission to the celestials had been, as Webster described it, to establish commercial relations such as England had obtained; to penetrate the exclusive region of Chinese manners, policy, and ideas, and conduct our intercourse with that empire one step further towards the principles which regulated the public relations of the European states.† Offensive, personally, though his appointment had been,‡ Cushing's mission well effected its combined purpose of friendship and 1843. 1845. January. 1844.

* Iowa's admission took effect in December, 1846.

† 2 Curtis's Webster.

‡ Observe Benton's virulence on this point; 2 Benton, 520.

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business.* The British opium war had lately exposed
1840-42. the immense resources of that still mysterious empire, the antipodes of Europe and America, whose national existence covers more ground in the space of history than that of any other people, ancient or modern, and whose peculiar civilization, homogeneous but commonplace, could already provide more than three hundred millions of the human race, living under the same laws and rulers, with all the means of prosperous existence. Many inventions which modern Europe believed were its own, such as gunpowder, the compass, and the printing-press, the Mongolian had worked out apart; in silks and porcelain, in all minute handicraft, his perfected skill was astonishing; but withal there was something miniature and stereotyped in the process of the Chinese mind, which repelled and still repels the civilized races of mankind. Strange customs, strange religion, a strange language, all hallowed by strange annals and traditions, still isolate this prodigious fraction of mankind in the globe over which they are beginning to wander.†

Polk, the President-elect, reaching Washington in mid-
Feb. 13. February, shortly after the electoral count, was welcomed by a Democratic cannonade on Capitol hill and a Democratic escort from the railroad station to his lodgings at the National Hotel.‡ The antipathy with which men of both parties regarded John Tyler pursued him to the last: the executive printing was taken from his official organ; as Congress would make no provision for the White House incidentals, he had been obliged to pay for his own fire and lights on state occasions. He retaliated briskly by his vetoes and by decapitating office-holders who were the personal friends of his bitter foes. Eleven mar-

* This treaty of "peace, amity, and trade" was signed July 3, 1844; ratifications were exchanged December 31, 1845.

† Cushing had been empowered to treat with Japan, but he found no opportunity of doing so. See 2 Tyler, 200.

‡ 12 Adams's Diary.

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shals and three district attorneys were turned out in the cold scarcely five weeks before his Presidential term would expire, and new appointments to office—some good, others bad, many tainted with nepotism—were made to the last moment. Texas Democrats and State-rights Whigs sustained his nominees, while Republican-Whigs and locofocos combined against them. A number of his twelfth-hour appointments were lost because the Senate refused to go into executive session and consider them. But the most important confirmation of these last few months was that of Samuel Nelson, of New York, to be an associate justice of the Supreme Court. It was nearly three o'clock in the morning of March 4th when Congress finally adjourned. One of the last bills forbade payment for some armed steamers which the President in his warlike humor had ordered without lawful authority. Tyler sent the bill back hastily with his veto; the Senate passed it over again almost unanimously, and the House followed suit with more than a two-thirds vote in its favor. It was a fitting and a curious rebuke to this magistrate of capricious disapprovals; being the first measure which had passed Congress in defiance of his veto, and the first that ever passed over any President's veto.*

March 3–4.

March 4.

John Tyler, as the reader will infer, had far more talent, as well as independence, than the Whigs had credited him with; and a disposition, moreover, which was hurtful enough when once astray, to occupy the full advantage of his strange opportunity. As a statesman and administrator he was much above the average, having industry, persistency, zeal to carry his point, and a light touch and fertility in resources which were worthy of nobler achievements. Like the immortal Virginians in whose galaxy he wished to be set, he was a thrifty and economical manager in affairs,† he scrutinized closely the public expenditures,

* Cong. Debates.

† Except, perhaps, for his naval armaments, which looked, most likely, to conquest.

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and held public agents to strict account. The contrast between the Van Buren administration and his own in this respect was highly in his favor. Aided by Whig legislation, he conquered the deficit which his term began with, brought up the average receipts once more so as to cover the average expenditures, and it was his boast, not unfairly, that finding the currency one of depreciated paper he left it gold and silver and treasury notes at par.* Holding, too, the public deposits for almost his entire term with the same despotic discretion Jackson had once exercised, he placed them in well-selected banks and kept them safely secured. No defalcation of any note occurred under him.† "In all things respecting the expenditure of the public moneys," observed Webster, "he was remarkably cautious, exact, and particular."‡

Tyler's prime preserved to him a youthful aspect. He had a fresh complexion and an animated face, was fair and delicate to look upon, and a favorite with women. Tall and slender, standing six feet high, with silky brown hair which thinned out slowly, a high, retreating forehead, facile and expressive blue eyes, a prominent beak of Roman model, a small and firm-set mouth, and a delicate chin, he had an air about him of patrician polish and high breeding. He dressed well, and his plaited shirt-front was adorned with a costly pin. His general impression was graceful and pleasing rather than strong; in his mien was something melodramatic, as though he either felt or exaggerated for effect beyond the common range of emotion.§ He was genial, and sometimes hilarious; prided himself much upon elegant hospitality and his skill in smoothing difficulties. He could entertain happily.

* 2 Tyler, chap. 13. † Ib.

‡ 2 Curtis's Webster, 275.

§ See portraits in 2 Tyler, and in Corcoran Gallery, Washington. Wise, who knew him well, describes him as one who could hardly say "no" to a friend, and was ever ready to appease a foe. Wise's Decades, 212. But his sympathies, we suspect, were narrow and slavocratic; for northerners and self-made men were frozen out of his confidence, and a national cabinet dwindled into a southern coterie.

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He had a smile, a silvery voice, a flattering address; he seldom quarrelled openly, but could not be bent by force. Of gentle pedigree, he was best won by gentleness. The versatility of his politics has been shown in this narrative, and his eulogist observes that he had always the happy faculty of appearing conspicuous at the right moment on all the great national questions.* The pendulum of his political morals vacillated between good and bad; and he pursued the game of politics with as keen a zest as Clay, though in qualities for leadership unworthy of comparison with the man against whom he measured himself. But if Tyler was but a sparrow for building up a national party, he could kill cock-robin, and Clay and Van Buren both fell pierced by his arrow. He was bland and deceitful, easily puffed up, and fancied himself strong with the people when lamentably weak. He had no real devotion of character, but played hard for his stakes, and when he lost threw up his hand in good humor. Indeed, Tyler's equanimity in trouble was worthy of a loftier ambition, and compels our admiration. Through all his tempestuous course, and under a load of opprobrium as well as private bereavement, such as would have crushed a sensitive spirit, he steered straight for all the advantage possible, and when scourged into retirement betrayed no sense of dishonor or degradation. His good opinion of himself never seemed to falter, nor did he look back upon his Presidential record without applauding himself for all he had done. Cupid consoled him for the defeats of Mars; Texas was not his fondest annexation scheme; and he left the public station to duplicate a long career of conjugal bliss.† Other instances

* 1 Tyler, 570.

† In the course of his official term Tyler buried a first wife, the mother of his sons, and married a second, who reared him a new family. The White House saw its funeral and its wedding. His second union (with the daughter of Colonel Gardiner, one of the victims of the "Princeton" explosion, *supra*, p. 455) made much gossip, because of the great disparity in years; Adams recalled Chaucer's tale of "January and May," and even Wise, as a bosom friend, felt forced to tell Tyler a good story apropos of such alliances. The marriage with this

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of his gay humor were shown after he left office.* Tyler's keen relish of life gave him, in short, a strong hold upon it; and he never knew the pangs of poverty. His animal spirits were unfailing; his tears passed off like summer showers, and if he mourned the dead he loved the living best.

The apostate, however wise or amiable, fills a spotted page in history, for in the long run even fidelity to honest error wins more respect than levity as between error and truth. The most signal measures of his administration yielded him no lasting renown. Webster made the Ashburton treaty the excuse for lingering in his cabinet and received the honors of that arrangement; Calhoun, whose influence gained the ascendant, decked himself, and quite unfairly, with the whole plumage of Texas annexation; even the glory of Tyler's bank vetoes was a negative one, based upon fallacious reasons and dimmed by dark reproach of duplicity. Whigs and Democrats together despoiled him of his fame after he had left office, so that Polk's memory was no sweeter than Clay's to the ex-President. His retirement was permanent until a last crucial test proved that his heart was with the South and not the Union. Wise, his wayward counsellor, has written kindly of him, as of the weaker vessel;† but except for the praises of cabinet officers uttered while they were part of it, Tyler's administration was never eulogized except by himself while he lived and after his death by his own sons.‡

charming and virtuous woman proved, however, a happy one. See Wise's Decades.

* See the story of his acceptance where his splenetic neighbors at home chose him overseer of a bad Virginia road. Wise's Decades.

† Wise's Decades.

‡ See 2 Tyler's Tyler.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

ADMINISTRATION OF JAMES K. POLK.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF TWENTY-NINTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1845—MARCH 3, 1847.

POLK'S inauguration, at the east front of the capitol, presented the spectacle of a vast concourse of umbrellas, for the rain poured down from the leaden skies as though to usher in a new era of woes. The oath of office was administered by Chief-Justice Taney. 1845. March 4.

The new and the retiring President had rode together in the procession; but something in the ovation seemed to displease the latter; perhaps it was the absence of all felicitous allusion in his successor's address. Two balls were held in the evening,—one select and non-partisan, and the other given by the pure Democracy,—and while Polk attended both, Tyler's family stayed away.*

Polk's inaugural address, which, in spite of bad weather, was longer than any former one, quoted the fathers of his faith, Jackson and Jefferson. It was more specific, too, in the announcement of a chief magistrate's intentions than had been customary at the outset of an administration, and entered more into the controverted details of a policy. These three points were conspicuous: (1) the federal Union must be preserved by the sacred and religious guard of its compromises; a hint this time not to nullifiers so much as to abolitionists; (2) our title to the country of the Oregon was "clear and unquestionable," and must be maintained; (3) reannexation, or "reunion," as he expressed it, was a

* See 2 Tyler; 12 Adams's Diary, 178; 68 Niles; National Intelligencer.

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question which belonged exclusively to the United States and Texas to settle between themselves as competent and independent powers. Demagogue propositions all three of these when stated thus under a veneer of patriotic fervor; and when published they set the "Liberty party" to penitential thoughts, angered Mexico extremely, and caused Great Britain to send up the war-cry on behalf of her Pacific frontier.

Polk, in truth, was not a man of soft and smirking, or even impartial phrases, but stern and resolute, having a sense of sole allegiance to the party which had elevated him to command. His mind was incapable of taking in the broader relations of things. What he went for he fetched; his platform was sacred as a creed, and opposition to that creed called for compulsion. Born in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, the oldest of ten children, and the son of a plain but sturdy farmer who removed to Tennessee early in this century and became one of the pioneers in the valley of the Cumberland, he grew up with that influential State, and, rising superior to his early opportunities, gained a fair classical education, after which he studied law, and, like so many of his fellow-southerners, went from law into politics. He entered Congress when thirty years of age, a devoted Jacksonian. His Democracy came honestly, for his father had been one of Jefferson's strong admirers. Constancy to the star of Jackson's fortunes brought him sure reward; and as Speaker and House leader under the administration of his illustrious fellow-citizen, he gained respect as a safe partisan. He could pull and sweat in the party traces; and though no originator of measures, he defended them ably and was unwearied in the despatch of routine business. After fourteen years of such experience he had left the scenes of our capital to share the vicissitudes of State politics during Jackson's retirement.* Here he was a governor, once elected and twice defeated, but his plain and consistent Democracy, his views on the Texas question, and Jackson's personal

* *Supra*, p. 310.

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friendship withal, proved him the man that discordant elements might unite upon. And so, while seeking the secondary distinction of Vice-President, Polk had the first and greater bestowed upon him; and on these familiar steps, after a six years' absence, he took the oath of office as his great patron had done before him.

A man of middle height, of plain and unassuming manners and conversation, with a grave and rather stern expression of countenance which was sometimes lit up by a pleasant smile, the new President inspired no awe, and there was nothing about him to recall the dignity and conscious force of the superb commander whose glory he reflected. But Polk understood well his place and what the Democrats expected of him. His Congressional training fitted him for despatching the public business, and his whole habit of thought made him diligent, systematic, faithful to his purpose, and concentrated upon carrying out the policy he had been the chosen instrument to accomplish. He heeded, moreover, all the rights, all the points, on his own side, as an even-paced lawyer will guard and fight for his client who is not troubled with a discriminating perception of the rights of an adversary. Admirably fitted did he show himself as executor of a prearranged policy by details, though he fell short, as events proved, of that ideality in statesmanship which seizes, controls, and harmonizes the great army of voters and leads to new fields and fresh conquests. Men about him who were capable of judging pronounce him one of the best of administrators, clear and persistent in his course, the master of his own cabinet, and not ruled by the ablest of his advisers.* One trait which gave him this controlling advantage was his power of secrecy, which was so great that those whose official intercourse was closest with him were unable to trace the course of his thoughts.† Polk, too, had respect for his place,

* Of this and other prominent traits in Polk's administration and character the author has had assurance from the lips of his sole surviving cabinet officer (1887), the venerable George Bancroft.

† 2 Tyler; John Y. Mason's letter.

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and, unlike his predecessor, who was always defending, explaining, and equivocating, he shut his lips against his worst traducers. In private life he was pure and upright, honest as the day (for men will be thus scrupulous who are ready to take advantage in their official relations), a scorner of bribes, and rigid in his religious observances. His wife, an accomplished woman of the strictest Presbyterian faith, strained the etiquette of the White House to her standard of decorum. This married pair had no children and their domestic habits were simple.

Such was the "scourge of God," foreordained, as it might almost seem, to fulfil the ends of the new American spirit of territorial manifest destiny, and, reckless of all intervening rights, carry the flag of our republic across the Sabine and over the continent till it swept a broad area to the Pacific seas. No former President, perhaps, at the outset of his administration, ever had so clear and positive a perception of what he meant to do, and none ever despatched his ambitious programme more thoroughly. In a private conversation with one of his chosen cabinet which is still preserved, Polk announced his purpose soon after he had taken the oath of office. "There are four great measures," said he, with emphasis, striking his thigh forcibly as he spoke, "which are to be the measures of my administration: one, a reduction of the tariff; another, the independent treasury; a third, the settlement of the Oregon boundary question; and, lastly, the acquisition of California."* And history should record that Polk entered on his official duties with the immovable purpose of carrying every one of these measures into effect, and before his term had ended accomplished them all.

As one element in his conduct of affairs the new President treated his administration as unifying everything. It was strongly characteristic of him to supervise every branch of the government, so that he might be enabled to bring the forces of the several departments into harmoni-

* Letter of George Bancroft to the author, February, 1887.

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ous and efficient action; a system essential to all great achievements. Hence he carried out his plans just as he had framed them.* His cabinet he formed with a sagacious regard to his personal situation; understanding the rivalries which had forced his selection as an unconspicuous Democrat, and knowing, furthermore, that he was not likely to be a candidate for re-election, he tried to keep himself clear of all succession claimants, and to surround himself rather with advisers who would neither intrigue nor use the patronage with private ends in view.† James Buchanan, who had been indorsed by the electoral college of Pennsylvania, he chose for his Secretary of State; a timid but amiable bachelor of many friendships, who hated trouble, and, being a high-tariff man himself, had convinced his State against all reason that Polk was a better protectionist than Clay. Robert J. Walker, of Mississippi, who was in reality a metamorphosed Pennsylvanian, he made his Secretary of the Treasury; a clever and acute man, but objectionable to many, for he was odorous of Texan scrip and loose in his private obligations. William L. Marcy, of New York, was Secretary of War; indelibly stamped by his own perennial phrase as a spoils politician, but for all that an able official, as events soon justified; a man of dry humor, who rarely laughed, whose keen eyes peered from under the ambush of shaggy eyebrows and a fixed expression, and whose chief solace of life, since he cared little for social gayety, was in looking over papers and documents. George Bancroft, of Massachusetts, the historian, was Secretary of the Navy; a lately defeated candidate for governor in a State whose literary sympathies were of a different cast; and he it was who founded presently for the branch of the service committed to him a training-school at Annapolis which would rank with that for the army at West Point. John Y. Mason, of Virginia, was Attorney-General; the only officer who held over from Tyler's cabinet, and that chiefly from reasons of

* Minutes of conversation (1857) with George Bancroft.
† 1 Curtis's Buchanan, 547.

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private friendship.* Cave Johnson, of Tennessee, a man of narrow and partisan mould, completed the cabinet as Postmaster-General. Taken as a whole, it was a cabinet that required direction; for even Buchanan, the foremost statesman of them all in national influence, was hardly brave enough to confront Great Britain and Mexico at one time. All of the appointments, however, were confirmed at once, except Bancroft's, which was postponed long enough to look into the record of this only political stranger on the list.†

March.

The new President found difficulties at once in the way of uniting the wings of his victorious party. First of all, the earnest southern-rights men, and all who had profited most from Tyler, wished Calhoun, their great apostle, retained in his place, and Calhoun himself seems to have hoped for the civility of an invitation which his nature disdained to court. He held firmly the Texas and Oregon negotiations, which were the chief subjects of present interest, and was engaged, besides, in preaching up the cause of slave propagation in a diplomatic correspondence with France, which puzzled Louis Philippe greatly. But Jackson and the moderate Democrats were bound to exorcise this spectre, nor was Polk himself disposed to live in a haunted house. As the upshot, Calhoun took umbrage with his admirers; and this made one important dissension to begin with.‡ Next, to reconcile the Van Buren loco-focos and the Democratic element hostile to Texas annexation was a task no easier and of far more consequence; and Polk labored to keep the Empire State attached to his party if not to his principles. He had

* Mason had been Polk's college classmate and life-long friend, and that is why Polk retained him. Conversation minutes with George Bancroft (1887).

† Cong. Debates; 68 Niles.

‡ 2 Benton; 68 Niles, and newspapers. Benton says that Calhoun was offered the English mission and refused it; that his friend Francis W. Pickens was offered it and refused also; and that it was soon given out that neither the great Carolinian nor his friends would accept office under Polk's administration.

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offered the Treasury to Silas Wright, the man, above all others, to whom he owed his election, but Wright declined,* and while the cabinet slate was thus disarranged, circuitous influences were brought to bear which weakened the final selection. Walker's appointment did not inspire confidence; nor had Marcy's name in New York that medicating influence which Polk had hoped for.† As for Tyler, the new administration promptly shook off that imaginary alliance which had never honestly existed; and the ex-President, who had started the game in this whole chapter of accidents, was soon heard complaining that his personal friends were ostracized and driven from office, although he had himself bestowed patronage on a brother of Polk since the Presidential election. Tyler never spoke well of his successor again as long as he lived.‡

Numerous important changes were soon made in the public service. The veteran McLane, of late years residing in Maryland, as president of Baltimore's chief railroad, went to the court of London to manage the Oregon difficulties, while Everett, who came home with plaudits, left politics to be the official head of Harvard University. McLane, feeling the weight of years, stayed abroad only long enough to aid in the temporary crisis, after which George Bancroft succeeded him, while Mason was once more transferred to the Navy department, where he had been serving, and Nathan Clifford, of Maine, a lawyer and a brief Congressman of impressive figure and manners, took Mason's place as Attorney-General. William R. King returning from the French mission, the accomplished Richard Rush, ripe like McLane in years and honors, succeeded him. Ralph J. Ingersoll, of Connecticut, was minister to Russia; Romulus M. Saunders, of North Carolina, to Spain; Andrew J. Donelson, of Tennessee, the shade of his illustrious kinsman and protector, to Prussia. Wise was recalled from Brazil, and thrown out of politics; while Wheaton, the publicist, and Irving left permanently the diplomatic

1845-47.

1846.

1845-47.

* Jenkins's Silas Wright. † 2 Benton. ‡ 2 Tyler's Tyler.

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pursuit. One literary appointment by this administration, and a modest one, was that of Nathaniel Hawthorne to be surveyor of Salem; and true is it that by such patronage as gives native scholarship and letters the opportunity to strike a fresh root an administration is likely to reap its richest reward.

In the first September of Polk's administration died Justice Story, of the Supreme Court, world-renowned as a jurist. Levi Woodbury, after twenty years of service in Senate and cabinet, was appointed his successor. Delays occurred the next year in filling Justice Baldwin's place, whose death made another vacancy; and such was the party discord in Pennsylvania that Polk's nomination of Judge Woodward, of that State, was rejected by the Senate; Buchanan yearned for the vacancy, but he was kept in the cabinet,* and another Pennsylvania judge, Robert C. Grier, received the merited honor.

1845. September.

1846.

While appeasing the Benton Democrats, who held the balance of power in the Senate, at the sacrifice of Calhounites and friends of the late President, this new administration yielded something to the young and impetuous southern spirit by making a change in the government organ. Van Burenism had long been a heavy weight for the slave propagandists, nor, perhaps, was Polk contented with the half-hearted support which Blair and the *Globe* had given him in the late canvass. Indeed, the triumph of the new platform of manifest destiny involved the final overthrow of Van Buren loco-focoism, and the word "loco-foco" soon disappeared from the political vocabulary. There is a story that Blair's head in a charger was the Herodian gift which Polk had been drawn into promising, while the canvass was hot, in consideration of South Carolina's electoral vote coupled with Tyler's withdrawal.† That story is improbable; and the *Globe's* downfall was the natural consequence rather of its

1845.

* 1 Curtis's Buchanan, 561.

† 2 Benton, 651.

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own flagging zeal in the new race.* As the valedictory of Blair and Rives correctly announced, their paper, originating in the will of Andrew Jackson, owed all to him and to Van Buren and their political friends.† Be this as it may, the new organ project took shape shortly after Polk was installed, and its financier was Secretary Walker; the *Globe* was forced to sell out, and Blair and Rives leaving the tripod, their metamorphosed sheet appeared on the 1st of May as the *Daily Union*, with Ritchie, of the Richmond *Enquirer*, as editor in charge. For all the soft words used at the outset, Polk's new organ increased the party distractions. Ritchie afterwards withdrew. Blair, like Coriolanus, made his banishers repent his exile. In short, what with this whole rude handling, from a political point of view, Van Buren and the old legitimists of the party were estranged from an administration whose bold policy proved a sharp wedge the moment it began to be driven. Nor, as one might add, could official organs be ever again what they had been once in point of influence; for the clicking electric messenger and the new railway development favored the rising journals far away from the capital which could gather and disseminate the news, resting not on officeholders, but the people.

April.

May 1.

The old chieftain in Tennessee was consulted by Blair in these obituary arrangements, as also were Benton and Governor Wright.‡ Jackson, now much shattered, and near the gate of death, felt the obligation of his most precious friendships, while sensible that Blair, like Van Buren, was out of line with the new policy on which his heart was set. He wrote many indignant letters, but ended by advising that the *Globe* should be sold.§ This was Jackson's last participation in affairs, after a grasp longer and more tenacious than any other retired Presi-

* Tyler denied all knowledge of such a bargain. 2 Tyler, 410. And any collusion between Tyler and Calhoun to bring this about would be very unlikely.

† 68 Niles, 150; National Intelligencer.

‡ 2 Benton, 658.

§ See Jackson MS. letters, cited 2 Benton, 652.

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dent has maintained before or since. No hand but death's could release the grasp of this wasted hero, nearly four-score. He had taken part in Polk's canvass, had expressed his views upon the new cabinet list;* he had warned his friend, the new President, against dangerous divisions in New York and Pennsylvania, and conscious that his end was close, he turned finally to Blair and Kendall as the best of men to guard his papers and his posthumous fame.† What worldly influence did he not exert even in death's chamber! Clay, Biddle, most of his old enemies, were prostrate. Houston was at the Hermitage; Tyler's messenger had stopped there; Texas annexation seemed to hang upon his advice. While the dying man lay upon his sofa languid and emaciated, with hollow cheeks and rayless eyes, swarms of anxious politicians alighted at his front door to secure his indorsement for office, persuaded that the new President was no more than his deputy. "No! no! no!" was his quick and irritated reply. This plague of the locusts for office pursued him to the very border of the spirit-world, where human favors could be dispensed no longer. Andrew Jackson died on the 8th of June, and the new administration from that date had to bear its own burdens.‡

April, May.

June 8.

The first great problem for Polk's administration to grapple with was Oregon and our north-western boundary. We have seen that the Democrats in 1844 coupled "all Oregon" with the "reannexation" of Texas in their Baltimore platform.§ This, we apprehend, was something of a party ruse, to make a campaign of territorial aggrandize-

* Walker was the only one he demurred to. 1 Curtis's Buchanan.

† 2 Benton, 653; 68 Niles, 345, etc.

‡ Jackson's last hours were gentle and impressive. See 3 Parton's Jackson, 678–680. But so inflexible and harsh had been his public course that the greatest orators of the nation were constrained to silence, and while the majority of the people mourned him, only those who had felt his favors came forward to pronounce his eulogy.

§ *Supra*, p. 467.

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ment more palatable to the North, or so that a counter-blast might distract the people's attention. In effect, such a platform showed the Democracy rushing with the cry, "Make way for liberty!" and swooping down simultaneously upon the British domains in one direction and Mexico in the other. Nothing could have been more absurd than to risk two foreign wars at one time for continental empire, but it shows how ravenous had grown this national appetite for new acquisitions of territory. As affirmed by the Democratic convention and reaffirmed in the inaugural address of the Democratic President, our title to "all Oregon" or "the country of the Oregon" was clear and unquestionable, and a new war fever soon raged through the north-west. Only less insensate than "Texas and reannexation" was this cry now raised of "54° 40′, or fight!" It was a companion effort to bluff other powers out of their rights. And in emulation of the plan which the Houston revolutionists had carried out so famously, northern settlers now hastened to this lonely and remote wilderness of the Columbia to perfect the national title by occupying the soil. If the pro-Texas slaveholders had not been sincere in inflaming northern hopes to this pitch, anti-slavery men at least, and those who were trying to prevent the violent dismemberment of Mexico, saw in Oregon a chance to outtrump President Polk in the game of war, and thereby block the greater plan.* Curious was it that at this very moment, when our whole national policy meant immediate aggrandizement beyond the Rocky Mountains, learned societies at the East were agitating the proposal that these United States should adopt the antiquated name of "Allegania."†

The title of this country to the whole of the Oregon country was not unquestionable, but had long afforded a just basis for negotiations and compromise with Great Britain. Three civilized powers, Russia, Great Britain, and the United States, had long asserted rights on the north-

* See Buell's Giddings, 161–164.

† See 68 Niles, 98; local newspapers.

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western coast of this continent. Russia at length agree-
1824-25. ing to confine her establishment to the country lying north of the parallel 54° 40′,* international controversy was reduced to that Pacific country which lay south of this line and was known as Oregon. Great Britain and the United States were to this soil the rival claimants. California, with the bay of San Francisco, still farther south, belonged of right to Mexico, Spain's grantee, whose northern boundary limit was the parallel of 42°. Monroe's Florida treaty quit-claimed to the United States all the right and title of Spain to the Pacific country lying north of 42°, Mexico being then a Spanish dependence.† This Oregon belt, the territory in dispute, lay, therefore, between the lines of 42° and 54° 40′ north latitude. For the most part it was a sterile region, in comparison with the rich and exuberant Mississippi valley or the California slope. Oregon had long been the synonyme of loneliness and profound solitude. High rocks and sandy plains gasping with thirst, whose mineral treasures were yet a mystery, gave the country an aspect utterly uninviting; only the last and lowest slope from the Cascade range to the sea attracted the pioneer ploughman, with its mild climate and fairly fertile soil. For five hundred miles east of the Rocky peaks, moreover, this vast solitude was only saved from becoming a desert by the streams thrown off from those everlasting snows which capped the great sky barriers, while the Grand Platte, by which explorers struck into their western trail towards the Pacific, unrolled a strip of green far into the interior of a sterile wilderness, like a cis-Atlantic Nile. The British government held extensive possessions north of the United States, and the Ashburton treaty‡ settled a mutual line of demarcation from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky (or Stony) Mountains at 49°; from this mountain-chain, however, to

* See vol. iii, p. 330. Russia made a treaty to this effect with Great Britain as well as the United States.

† vol. iii, p. 95; treaty of 1819.

‡ *Supra*, p. 401.

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the Pacific Ocean no line had ever been agreed upon. The chief object, then, of these contending powers in the Oregon dispute was to control the Columbia River, which watered this Pacific slope, and to hold the ocean ports at its entrance together with the inlet south of Vancouver's Island.*

There being no ground for any absolute and positive claim to Oregon by either Great Britain or the United States which could exclude the other, a compromise line was the natural result, unless we could win by conquest,

* For the points of title here in controversy between Great Britain and the United States see the National Intelligencer article copied in 68 Niles, 364; also Edinburgh Review, July, 1845. Richard Rush's Court of London gives both sides of the question, as presented in the negotiations of 1823–24. The English view is partially shown in books by Falconer and Dunn; the American in a new edition of Robert Greenhow's History of the Oregon Question. (1) Spanish discovery is positive in priority up to a point about 43° north, which was reached in 1843, but beyond that it is met by Drake's (English) discovery of an extent not certain, and the whole issue remains in doubt. There is no trace of any French right which could have passed to the United States with the cession of Louisiana under President Jefferson. As to the mouth of the Columbia, Captain Gray, of Boston, made the discovery in 1792, and Vancouver, the first British navigator who ever entered that river, admitted that he found Gray there; Jefferson afterwards despatched Lewis and Clarke to the region. (2) Spain, though exploring much, never actually occupied the Oregon region. The fur trade made the basis of early settlements by Great Britain and the United States. Astoria was founded by John Jacob Astor in 1811, with that object in view and American occupation besides; but that post was captured by the British afterwards in the war of 1812, and Astor's fur speculations were finally given up. See Irving's Astoria. To the Astoria occupation the Hudson's Bay Company made a sort of colorable British offset; and to Vancouver's Island England had a claim more tenable, which was founded on a settlement at Nootka Sound in the latter part of the eighteenth century, which Spain treated as an invasion of her rights. (3) The United States made the most of the cession of all Spanish rights under the treaty of 1819. But Great Britain met this by producing a convention of 1790 with Spain, which permitted their rival claims to Nootka Sound to remain open, fairly arguing that this convention reduced Spain's right there to a mere joint occupancy with Great Britain.

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by colonizing it out of Great Britain's control. Contiguity was a popular argument employed on our behalf; but contiguity suggested rather that the parallel of 49°, which made our northernmost line elsewhere, should be prolonged to the Pacific. Three successive attempts, in fact, had been made since the war of 1812 to divide Oregon* between the daughter and the mother-country by that line; but as that would give the Columbia River to the United States, Great Britain had always objected.
1815-27. Free navigation in that river, besides, President Monroe would have yielded in 1818; but that could not content; and Adams, the younger, after fruitless negotiations under his Presidency of the same purport, consented that the joint occupation of the Oregon territory
1824-26. which had been arranged from time to time ever since the peace of 1815 should remain in force for an indefinite period, with a right, however, reserved to either government to abrogate the convention and the whole arrangement on giving twelve months' notice to the other.†

Thus had the Oregon question slumbered through Jackson's stormy rule, while our own American settlements were few and feeble. The Hudson's Bay Company under the British flag monopolized all traffic and supply at Vancouver's Island; and these fur traders, the great capitalists of the region, whose immediate interest was to keep the country a vast hunting-ground, claimed in those
1837. years that they deserved well of Parliament because with their many stations they were converting Oregon rapidly into a British province.‡ British laws were extended by degrees over the inhabitants in Oregon, mostly British subjects. But our extreme north-western States, Michigan and Missouri in particular, had sounded the note of alarm. Linn, of Missouri, introduced in the Senate a bill to promote the American occupation
1838. of Oregon; he pressed this measure from time to time, and at last the Senate sustained him in the twenty-

* Vol. iii, pp. 128, 308, 508; 2 Tyler, chap. 15.

† Ib.; convention of August 6, 1827. ‡ 68 Niles.

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seventh Congress by passing a bill which was dropped in the House.*

This Oregon question during President Tyler's eccentric orbit made a rallying point for statesmen who shared the passion for widening our national area, but wished to head off Texas. Thus, Benton, who had once declaimed about the Rocky Mountains as our convenient, natural, and everlasting borders, was now full of the American idea of spanning this continent from ocean to ocean. Calhoun, on the contrary, had opposed Linn's measure in debate, arguing that England, if offended, might concentrate troops in Oregon from the East Indies and bring joint occupation to an end; whereas time would bring us all we wanted, for our population was already rolling resistlessly to the Pacific.† The Tyler policy treated Oregon as a region to be bartered off for the sunnier slopes of Texas and California, whose conquest involved us with Mexico alone.‡ Tyler's tripartite plans for combining Mexico, Great Britain, and the United States melted like a night vision, nor did masterly inactivity meet the demand of our north-western States. The Oregon question grew in interest until it forced the Democrats in national convention to put a northern as well as a southern annexation plank into their platform. Tyler's administration took the hint of that platform. Calhoun brought out the subject in a faint-hearted way, either at the President's instance, or because Pakenham, the new British minister, called it up§ after the

1842–43.

1843.

1844.

1844. June.

* Cong. Debates, 1842.

† 2 Tyler, chap. 15. This speech, we suspect, played into the plan of Tyler's southern conclave, which was to sacrifice Oregon, if need be, and conciliate Great Britain, but, above all things, to work for Texas and California.

‡ *Supra*, p. 447; 2 Tyler, chap. 15.

§ 2 Tyler, chap. 15, and 2 Benton, 660. Upshur, in October, 1843, had sent a despatch to Great Britain which enlarged upon the American claim to Oregon, but gave no hint as to the negotiation for California; which was a matter too delicate to commit to paper. 2 Tyler, chap. 15, Appendix. This was simultaneous with the overtures to Texas, and, according to Tyler, meant no more than to sound the British ministry.

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rejection of the Texas treaty; and negotiations were begun in Washington. Pakenham renewed the offer in Great Britain's behalf of running the parallel of 49° to the Columbia, and then pursuing that river to the sea with a new addition of "free ports" south of 49° to the United States. Calhoun declined this, but made no counter proposition, arguing our claim to the whole region. Arbitration being also declined by our government, the question rested, when Polk came into office, with Pakenham waiting for the United States to propose some definite plan of adjustment.* Meantime, the Oregon faction tried with all their might to commit the United States to extreme ground. President Tyler, when requested to state how matters stood, at the final session, declined to inform Congress.† But the House with giddy zeal pushed through a bill for terminating joint occupation under the Adams treaty; that bill reached the Senate too late to be considered.‡

August. 1845. Jan.–Mar.

Thus stood the Oregon question at Polk's accession. The warlike tone of his inaugural address§ quickened the emigration spirit, and long trains of wagons and cattle were soon in motion over the far remote plains, with men, women, and children, bearing their household goods, whose destination was the valley of the Columbia, beyond the remotest barrier of our ice-bound peaks. The love of the distant and uncertain will attract the adventurous more than surrounding comforts. Six long months did it take these trains to traverse the two thousand miles which intervened between the rendezvous at Independence, Missouri, and that south branch of the Columbia, known as the Willamette, where these settlers were finally to halt; and though with horses only, one might make the journey in a somewhat shorter time, the

1845.

* Ex. Docs.; 2 Tyler, chap. 15; 69 Niles.

† Message of President Tyler, Feb. 19, 1845.

‡ Cong. Debates.

§ *Supra*, p. 495.

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hardships from hunger and exposure were far greater. When the new administration was well under way, Buchanan resumed negotiations with Pakenham, arguing, as Calhoun had done, that our title to all Oregon was good, but offering as a compromise the 49th parallel, with free ports to Great Britain on Vancouver's Island. That Polk's diatribe had been for political effect was obvious. But not satisfied with this retreat from the line of 59° 40′, Pakenham argued the British side of the question, winding up rather tartly by expressing the hope that something else would be offered "more consistent with fairness and equity, and with the reasonable expectations of the British government." This turn of expression grated harshly; Buchanan at once withdrew the proposal which it had cost some compunctions to make, and cut the correspondence short by reasserting our rightful claims to the whole of Oregon.* July. August.

In this delicate posture of the subject the twenty-ninth Congress assembled at the capitol, with the administration party dominant in both wings, and both Houses greatly excited to learn what the Executive had to communicate on this and the Mexican situation. In the Senate chamber, the new Vice-President occupied the chair which Mangum had filled *pro tem.* through Tyler's higher incumbency. Webster was back again already, Calhoun soon found room also. Besides these reappearing lights, Reverdy Johnson, of Maryland, and Thomas Corwin, able Whigs, came to shed their beams; Lewis Cass, too, the chief of Democratic aspirants, who had held high office, but never sat in Congress before; and finally, Simon Cameron, of Pennsylvania, destined for a long sway in the sordid politics of his State.† The House, 1845. Dec. 1.

* Ex. Docs.; 69 Niles.

† Cameron's present election by the Harrisburg legislature over the regular candidate as a moneyed high-tariff Democrat gave rise to many scandals. He had something to do with the establishment of the new official organ which superseded the Globe. Local newspapers; 2 Benton, 651.

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strongly Democratic in tone, while the Senate administration men hardly turned the scales, contained many rising men of both parties. In this branch, John W. Davis, of Indiana, was at once chosen Speaker; the other officers were elected at leisure.

The President's message absorbed the attention of the second day. On the Oregon question it published for the first time the whole course of the Pakenham negotiation, and boldly asserted that this government had gone far enough in the spirit of concession. Polk called upon Congress to consider what measures were needful to protect our just title to that territory. This message proposed, too, that Congress should abrogate the convention for joint occupation by giving that twelve months' notice which it stipulated. "Peace or war" was the animus of this message; and Secretary Buchanan in another despatch soon confirmed the impression more decidedly that the President would never abandon the claim of the United States to the whole territory of Oregon.*

Dec. 2.

1846. January.

From this official announcement the leading members of the majority and the party press took their cue. "54° 40′—the whole or none!" "54° 40′, or fight!" were the toast and the war-cry. Cass and Hannegan in the Senate, and Douglas in the House, took up this subject in hot eagerness, the war feeling being strongest in their north-west vicinity. Anti-slavery Whigs sided with them from mingled motives. There were many intemperate speeches and propositions, partly for grasping the whole, partly to curb the appetite for California and Texas; partly, too, as Adams held, that by a warlike front we might better carry what was worth claiming. Some brought up the Monroe doctrine for the purpose of pushing Great Britain from the American continent altogether. Resolutions for giving notice to Great Britain as the President had advised were made the special order in the House early in January and debated until February 7th,

1846. Jan.-Feb. 7.

* President's Message; Ex. Docs., treaty of 1827.

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when in a qualified and softened form they passed that body and were sent to the Senate.* The Senate occupied a long time on this subject, until it became evident that the compromisers had the majority, whose limit was the line of 49°. Oregon and Texas were cradled together, but to the southern annexationists Oregon was only a fondling; Texas was their real solicitude. Webster and Crittenden were for yielding the line. Benton would not go beyond the administration, whose spirit was uncertain, and at length the House resolution passed the Senate in a form still less warlike than before.† A conference committee once more modified the resolution, leaving it inoffensive to Great Britain, and their report was accepted.‡ In fine, Congress authorized the President to give the notice at his discretion;§ and a preamble pronounced this step an incentive to a speedy and amicable adjustment between the two governments. The President gave notice of abrogation accordingly.‖

Feb.–April.

April 23.

Great Britain had cause to fear trouble by this time from the swarm of American settlers which the excitement had already set in motion. The partition of this mountainous wilderness seemed fair enough to the British public, and the London *Times* argued that England ought to renew the offers sanctioned by American Presidents on the basis of the 49th parallel.¶ Pakenham, in view of new instructions from home, had already opened a soothing correspondence to forestall any action by Congress; first offering that the negotiation should proceed as though the rejected offer had not been withdrawn, and

1845. December.

* The House substitute passed by 163 to 54, Cong. Debates; 69 Niles, 376.

† See 70 Niles; Cong. Debates. The vote as taken on Crittenden's compromise resolution stood 40 to 14.

‡ The Senate accepted this report by 42 to 10 (Benton voting for it), and the House by 142 to 46.

§ Joint Resolution, April 27, 1846.

‖ This notice was delivered May 21, by Minister McLane.

¶ London Times, Jan. 3, 1846. And see Edinburgh Review, July, 1845.

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next proposing arbitration, neither of which proposals were agreeable. But Buchanan in a mollified tone
1846. Jan.–Feb. suggested through McLane, our minister at London, what the President might be disposed to accept should Great Britain herself make the proposition. Lord Aberdeen, after perceiving the favorable drift of Congress, submitted an offer. This was to compromise on the 49th degree, reserving to Great Britain the whole of Vancouver's Island by a line running through the strait of Fuca; the free navigation of the Columbia was asked in addition, but only for the Hudson's Bay Company and those trading with it, and not for British subjects generally. This project was a fair one to save official pride on both sides;
June 6–12. June 15. Polk submitted it confidentially to the Senate, and being favorably advised he sanctioned a corresponding treaty, which was promptly signed and ratified on the part of both governments.*

This settlement, mutually honorable and advantageous to Great Britain and the United States, was hastened by a strange climax of affairs, in which each negotiating party found itself too weak to take advantage of the other, while both were anxious to retreat from an embroilment. Polk's administration, as we shall soon see, had another war on its hands already; while Sir Robert Peel tottered under the obloquy of his corn-law repeal, that reform which served for his noblest public monument and his tomb.† Of frozen Oregon the better part was ours, and the last mile-stone of the American Union was peacefully placed at the Pacific.

The pacifying temper of the Peel ministry through these Oregon troubles was due in some degree to the disposition shown by our new rulers on the tariff question. England's splendid peer, who fell from power because he dared

* See treaty of June 15, 1846, which was proclaimed in August. The Senate ratified by 41 to 14, only extremists like Cass voting against it. See, also, 2 Tyler, chap. 15; 1 Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 20; 70 Niles; 71 ib., 106.

† See McCarthy's History, chap. 16.

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leave his order to lift up the workingman, was intent, most of all, upon the free-trade policy whose successful establishment has reversed British intercourse with the rest of mankind. The triumph of Cobden and cheap bread, under the Peel alliance, would throw open the queen's gates to our western granaries and admit the American farmer to an immense foreign market which hitherto had been barred against him. Fresh free-trade breezes swept through the Mississippi valley, welcomed this time by the vast food-producing region of the north-west, and not by southern staple-raisers alone, those pitiless foes of a protective tariff. A great trading and carrying interest by sea and land felt the light stir; for by what surer means could the export of American grain, bread-stuffs, and staples be made to thrive than by inviting British commodities back in exchange by a scale of duties more favorable? Thus was the free-trade tendency, like the protective before it, a rule of expediency to be accommodated to the times, though in no sense to make a governing theory. Unlike Great Britain, ours was a country which contained in itself all the resources of independent existence; it was, moreover, a new country with infantile industries which needed fostering for some time longer. The Emperor Napoleon, when asked if he would countenance free trade for France, is said to have responded: "We are fifty years behind England. Give me skill and experience; place me upon an equal footing; and I will try the experiment."

President Polk in his first annual message recommended a change in the tariff favorable to this new situation of affairs, and his Secretary of the Treasury reported to the same effect. Their argument assailed the tariff of 1842 as a discrimination against agriculture to swell the profits of the manufacturers, and they denounced the principle of protection; they claimed that import duties should be adjusted to the necessities of the revenue. They took issue with the Whigs and with Webster on the assertion that a high tariff insured high wages to the workman and kept him employed; it was the mill-owner, they replied, and not his workman who took the

1845. December.

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extra profits. By such arguments the party in power prevailed, alluding as little as possible to the free-trade parallel in England; its opponents, on the other hand, trying to arouse prejudice by taunts of a British alliance, and by circulating a story that Secretary Walker had privately submitted his report to Pakenham before publishing it to Congress. A lower tariff bill was reported; it passed the House in July, the largest vote in its favor being thrown by members from the north-west and south-west;* in the Senate, after a hard struggle, it managed to pass with an amendment† in which the House concurred; and the President approving at once, the bill became a law, to go into effect on the 1st of December.‡ This Polk tariff act reduced the protective duties, and as a new feature made all assessments *ad valorem*, a method which, unlike specific duties, tempts the importer to fraud. Whigs were incensed, astonished; for the Tyler tariff, which had worked so well that Polk carried Pennsylvania and his election only by hollow professions of his favor towards it, could not have been overthrown at this Congress had not Dallas, the Vice-President, also turned upon Pennsylvania with his casting vote.§ Such was the general ill fortune which pursued the Whigs; and it was cold consolation to them that the Pennsylvania Democracy forswore Polk as a deceiver and hung their own recreant Dallas in effigy.‖ The sequel will show, however, that under one tariff or the other our national industries continued to prosper. "British all over" this Polk tariff was called by the manufacturers; but Great Britain gained no advantage under it for which a full equivalent was not given in return; though, to be sure, it lowered

1846. July 3.

July 28.

July 30.

* The vote stood 114 to 95. Cong. Debates; 70 Niles.

† The Senate vote stood 28 to 27.

‡ Act July 30, 1846.

§ Dallas gave his casting vote at a critical point in favor of the new tariff; and his vote would have been required on the bill's final passage had not a Whig senator from Tennessee voted as his legislature bade him, against his own convictions.

‖ Newspapers of the day.

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the duty rate on woollen goods from forty to thirty per cent., and reduced the scale for cotton fabrics and iron. Business is deranged by frequent changes or the agitation of changes; but bad as change must be, our people can never hope to settle down into a comprehensive national policy with anything like permanence unless some experiment is permitted of opposing systems which in turn dominate opinion. Hitherto American wheat and grain had been excluded from the ports of every nation in Europe; and of flour, England, in 1844, imported more than twice as much from her American colonies as from the United States.

Another act of this first session in the line of revenue reform established the warehouse system, advantageous to both government and the importers; under it security was the substitute for credit where full duties were not paid in cash when the goods were landed.*

One inevitable result of the recent Whig defeat was to bring back Van Buren's independent treasury to favor, and to decree the absolute divorce of Bank and State. Polk's opening message advised such a policy, and Congress passed, as had been expected, the needful legislation.† Such was the final triumph of a public project which had only five years before overwhelmed with defeat a Democratic President and his party. The new, or rather the restored sub-treasury system, made the government the guardian of its own treasures, and required that public dealings should be henceforth in gold and silver coin. State banks were left to their own paper devices under State regulation, for meeting the wants of the people; and State bank-notes lost much of their former cir-

1845. December.

* Act August 6, 1846. Goods on which duties had not been paid were to be kept in public storehouses. In special instances warehousing had been permitted already; and here, as under the pre-emption system, a broad principle was applied in legislation after exceptional acts had demonstrated its excellence.

† Act August 6, 1846, chap. 90. See 2 Benton, 658, 726; 2 Statesman's Manual, 1461. This was a re-enactment of the act of 1840. *Supra*, p. 324.

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culation, having been received hitherto by federal officials at discretion. This was thought for many years the end and solution of the national currency problem; but it was not.

Two points are observable in the rapid and important work of this Congressional session: first, that Texas, whose representatives cast their votes with the rest, was now a State in the Union; next, that the incorporation of that State had speedily involved the United States in a war with Mexico. The administration and its friends were courageous certainly, or venturesome, in adhering to their new tariff bill after the war had actually begun and more than ten millions had been appropriated for maintaining our arms. They believed, doubtless, that because the contest of republics was so unequal the stronger would easily prevail; but there is a strength in desperation to save one's native soil which may humble even conquerors. Money, they thought, would purchase peace, would purchase territory, by bribing at least the leaders of this poor people; but the leaders heeded the public voice, and the people, though their republic be misgoverned, are rarely craven enough to barter for gold their country's cause. Mexico, though torn with intestine quarrels like all the other Spanish-American countries to the south of us, preserved the spark of liberty and the remnant of her old Spanish pride. In fine, if we were to conquer Mexico, we must conquer her like Cortez. This mingled race of Aztecs and Aztec conquerors had too little cold prudence to purchase a pusillanimous peace. But besides all this, the rapacity of our annexationists was already too great for any peaceful sacrifice to have saved Mexico from mutilation. Texas, indeed, was already torn from her; whether that province should go to the United States or remain independent had been the only practical issue these last four years; had that been the only prize, we might have borne it off in peace after all our perfidy. But "purposely," as Presi-
1844. dent Tyler had stated it in his Texas treaty message, the boundary of Texas had been kept open for nego-

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tiation with Mexico. This meant that he adopted the fraud of the Texas revolutionists in voting to themselves the whole domain of Mexico to the Rio Grande, whereas the original and uniform south-western boundary of the Texas province was admitted to be the river Nueces and its interior valley, an area sufficient to comprise all they had colonized.* It meant still more than this, that the glut of our slaveholders would not be satiated without a new boundary line across the continent which would give them New Mexico and the long-coveted region of California. Polk's first hope was like his predecessor's, that California, so remote from the seat of the Mexican government, might be bought;† that if our terminus was fated to advance, the terminus of our sister republic would accommodate and recede. But all such hopes were a delusion. The wolf seemed now our emblem, as of the splendid republic which Romulus founded; but Mexico was not the lamb dumb before her shearers.

Neither of these southern-bred Presidents felt that compunction for the rights of the weaker which makes just men hesitate. Tyler's swift messenger, Floyd Waggaman, hurried to the Hermitage, bearing the packet of despatches which tendered annexation to Texas under the midnight option which our retiring magistrate had exercised.‡ Not finding there Major Donelson, our Texan *chargé*, he journeyed on at once to Galveston, by way of New Orleans, and fulfilled his errand. Donelson, by the 1st of April, laid this unexpected offer of the United States before President Anson Jones at the Texan capital. The fear of European influence in this quarter seems not to have been unfounded; for England and France, while careful not to come into collision with our government, were trying to circumvent its designs. These European agents were laboring for the peace which Mexico wished,—namely, under a pledge that Texas should not annex herself to any other country. Preliminary

1845. March.

April 1.

* See Austin's map of Texas published in 1837.

† George Bancroft's MS. letter, Feb. 5, 1887.

‡ *Supra*, p. 488.

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articles to that effect had just been signed by Ashbel Smith, the Texan Secretary of State, and sent to Mexico, and the Mexican Congress formally and in honest faith sanctioned a peaceable settlement on such a basis.* But it was diamond cut diamond in Texas diplomacy, and Donelson's despatches changed the whole face of the situation. President Jones had listened seriously to the plan of independence with renunciation of the United States,† but the enthusiasm of his people was irresistible. He convened the Texan Congress for the 16th of June and recommended a convention for the 4th of July following.

March.

Two offers confronted this Congress when it met: from Mexico a treaty of peace on terms of separate independence; from the United States annexation under our joint resolution. The former was unanimously rejected, the latter unanimously accepted. A convention followed, which met at Austin; here only one dissenting voice was heard when the vote was taken on annexation to the United States, and the popular vote, three months later, upon the adoption of a State constitution to submit to the American Congress, showed that Texas had but one sentiment left.‡

June.

July.

October.

President Polk on his accession had left Tyler's choice of the alternative to take full effect.§ By his direction Secretary Buchanan had given official assurance that if the people of Texas accepted our offer we would look after the consequences. Secret agents were sent, besides, to watch the movements of British and French emissaries and aid in counteracting them. A special message, after our Congress convened in December, transmitted the tidings that Texas had fully conformed to the

Dec. 9.

* 2 Tyler, chap. 14; 1 Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 21.

† Ib. Houston appears to have done the same, though he professed afterwards that he had been merely "coquetting" with European powers so as to make the United States jealous. See 68 and 73 Niles; 74 ib., 314; Ashbel Smith's Reminiscences.

‡ 2 Tyler, chap. 14; 68 Niles.

§ See Annual Message, December, 1845; 69 Niles, 281; Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 21; 2 Benton, 637.

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proposed terms of admission to the Union, and was already knocking at the door. Congress took action quickly so as to escape the avalanche of anti-slavery remonstrances which began to descend from the North and northern legislatures. A bill for the immediate admission of Texas was driven through both Houses under whip and spur, and received the President's signature. The first joint December. resolution of this session was one which admitted Texas into the Union on an equal footing with the original States; and its first act extended the laws of the United States over that lately foreign jurisdiction.* Two senators and two representatives were permitted to the new State, and with rapid expedition the new State government was organized. Henderson was elected governor of Texas by a large majority. Jones, the late President, went into retirement; Sam Houston managed to get chosen one of the United States senators after public assurances that he had always been an annexationist, playing perfidy every time to the other side. Ashbel Smith, in fine, was made the scapegoat for British intervention, and Texan diplomacy came to an end simultaneously with the independent filibustering republic. 1846.

The President's message boasted this new accession of the Lone Star Republic as a "bloodless achievement" in which the sword had no part.† The boast was premature and presumptuous, and Polk well knew it. This self-same message betrayed his anxiety over the course Mexico would take in consequence. Incensed a second time by the faithlessness of these revolutionist invaders in breaking from a peace after the preliminaries had been arranged; incited, too, by those Oregon troubles which for the moment seemed likely to plunge their despoilers into a war with England; the people of the Mexican republic were surely in no temper to let Texas depart unpunished. There were, besides, the boundaries unadjusted, claims unsettled, and Texas was only the beginning of our projected dismemberment. To

* Joint Resolution and Act Dec. 29, 1845; 70 Niles.

† Annual Message, Dec. 2, 1845.

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satisfy Mexican claimants and the speculating ring in Texas land and scrip, of whom Secretary Walker was the reputed head,* to accomplish at all the purposes with which this new administration had set out, to make our title defensible against the world, some treaty with Mexico, our offended neighbor, was indispensable; and no treaty was likely to be procured without war, or the menace of a war, unless Mexican leaders could be bribed to sell out the people.

1845. March 6. Upon the despatch of Tyler's unrecalled messenger the Mexican minister at Washington had protested and demanded his passports. The loyal republicans of Mexico were furious when the news reached them

May–Nov. that Texas had flung herself into the embrace of the United States, like an eloping daughter; and their fierce clamor was for war and instant vengeance. Herrera, the President of the republic, an upright citizen, though of peaceful and compromising disposition, shrank

1846. January. before the rising storm, and in the first month of the new year Paredes, a revolutionary soldier, was installed in his place.†

Many of our southern citizens had felt confident all along that the Mexicans would bluster but not fight; they were incredulous that freemen of this inferior type could show courage in what was sure to be a losing cause. But Polk's administration felt just misgivings. Assuming that Texas and the United States had the right to unite if they chose, it did not follow that Mexico had no right to complain, nor was it at all likely that she would yield her sanction to the match. Soft excuses produced no impression. European diplomatists predicted that Mexico would make war on the United States. President Polk, alarmed at the rising spirit of the press and people of our sister republic, determined to anticipate hostilities by throwing a strong body of our troops upon the Texan frontier.‡ This was done at the request of Texas, but not until after its convention had fully

* See 2 Benton, 680.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft's Pacific States, chaps. 11, 12.

‡ 1 Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 21.

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accepted the proffered terms of union. From the first Polk resolved to maintain the pretentious claim that the western boundary of Texas was at the Rio Grande del Norte; and in pursuance of that resolve General Zachary Taylor was ordered to take position between the Nueces and that river. Sailing in July from New Orleans with a considerable force, Taylor, soon after his arrival, established his camp at Corpus Christi, on the west side of the Nueces, the farthest point to which the Texan population had ever extended. His first orders directed him to occupy that disputed territory up to the Rio Grande for defence and protection to the same extent that Texas had occupied it, without committing any act of hostility, and so as not to interfere with any posts actually occupied by Mexican forces or Mexican settlements. For about six months, therefore, Taylor's army remained posted at Corpus Christi, entirely unmolested and unmolesting, and awaiting events,* his force at first consisting of fifteen hundred, but increased by November to almost four thousand.

1845. July.

July-Aug.

This was the situation on the frontier when Polk's message vaunted the "bloodless achievement" of Texas. Meantime, he had undertaken with the strictest secrecy to discover what negotiation could possibly be effected with the maimed republic. Official relations had of course been broken off. The latest instalments due the United States under the claims treaty Mexico had ceased to pay, though faithful to her debt until the Texas intrigue was revealed to her eyes.† In October the Mexican Secretary of State was confidentially apprised that our new Executive wished to send an envoy to Mexico

1845. October.

* Ex. Docs.; 1 Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 21. 70 Niles, 260.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft. President Santa Anna had ordered the fourth and fifth instalments paid in cash after the United States rejected the Tyler treaty in 1844; but it seems that some of the drafts were dishonored. On January 30, 1846, eight quarterly instalments were overdue.

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clothed with power to arrange the pending questions between the United States and that republic. His answer was equivocal and to the effect that Mexico, though considering herself deeply injured, would receive a commissioner from the United States who came empowered to offer satisfaction for the wrong done as to Texas. Presi-
November. dent Polk waited for no clearer explanation, but packed off John Slidell, of Mississippi, to the Mexican capital; giving him the credentials of envoy and minister of the United States with full power to discuss and settle all disputed questions.* Slidell, a cotton economist of the new school and a member of Congress, was one of those who felt over-confident that Mexico under the pincers might roar but she would not fight.† It was only
November. three weeks before Congress should come together that he took his instructions and hastened to the Gulf. His instructions were chiefly verbal, and from President Polk himself; they pointed, we may fairly believe, to the acquisition of California, for which he was authorized to offer a good round sum;‡ and Polk enjoined it upon him not to tell to a single human being what those verbal instructions were.§ Slidell reached Vera Cruz quite in-
Dec. 3. opportunely, as it happened, and while the menace of a United States squadron off the harbor made the inhabitants of the town very angry. The temporizing Herrera, too, was now at his last straits, while the war fever in Mexico was increasing daily. In the midst of an irritating correspondence over our minister's credentials, which the Mexican Secretary showed were broader than he had consented to, the Herrera government sank under the wave of revolution, and Paredes, the soldier, was borne into power. At the ancient capital Slidell found in-

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13.

† See letter, 1 Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 21.

‡ See 16 H. H. Bancroft, 598.

§ 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 600, etc. Congress was informed of the unceremonious manner in which Slidell had been despatched, but as to his instructions the President was silent. Message, December, 1845.

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stalled a military conclave, from whom, at first, he was sanguine of coaxing a purchase, thinking that such warriors had their price; and Secretary Buchanan prompted him in official despatches that indemnifying Mexico for her "imaginary rights" over Texas was not the sole business he was sent upon. But not one ray of recognition came from this soldier government; and in March, Slidell's passports were sent to him at his request, and he left in discomfiture.* 1846. January. March.

President Polk had surmised that this would be the end of it; and anticipating Mexico's obstinate refusal to part with her domains in peace, he took his ready alternative. Without a word of warning, however secret, to Congress, which was in full session, with no conference on this subject, further than to hint repeatedly, as the Oregon difficulty gave him double excuse for doing without exposing his game, that it was prudent in times of peace to prepare for war,† he ordered General Taylor to advance and take a position on the left bank of the Rio Grande; he also assembled a strong fleet in the Gulf of Mexico. This was done upon the downfall of Herrera. Polk's Secretary of State meanwhile had urged Slidell to try his best to get the Paredes government to recognize him, so that the President might make out a clear case of refusal on Slidell's return, which would be the signal for proposing to Congress "energetic measures."‡ Despatches more contemptuous of a country to whom an apology was owing were never penned. To provoke this feeble sister republic to hostilities, at the same time putting on her the offence of shedding the first blood, was the step predetermined if she would not sign away her domains for gold. January 13.

This was the programme: to let loose the demon of war,

* 1 Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 21; 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13; Ex. Docs. 196, Twenty-ninth Congress.

† 2 See President's Messages, Dec. 2, 1845, and March 24, 1846.

‡ 1 Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 21. Slidell was also requested to find out all he could while in Mexico and see whether the European powers were planning interventions. Ib.

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and under the smoke of defending the fourth part of Mexico we had just snatched from her to despoil her of another. The programme succeeded after a struggle, but the dark catastrophe locked up in our bloody acquisitions was hidden for many years. Zachary Taylor—plain, blunt warrior that he was—obeyed the orders of his commander-in-chief without a question. Marching his troops through the wild and uninhabited country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, he reached the south-western angle of land where this latter river empties into the Gulf of Mexico. His instructions required him to take possession of Point Isabel and other points which threatened Matamoras, the Mexican town on the opposite bank of the Rio Grande; points occupied by Mexican citizens he had six months before been ordered not to molest. Taylor's advance, besides menacing an old Mexican town across the river, was a wanton and warlike invasion of territory on the eastern bank colonized by Mexico, to which Texas never had the shadow of a right, though voting it into her dominion. Spanish-American citizens and the local authorities protested to no purpose; for Taylor intrenched himself opposite Matamoras, in sight of the bayonets and banners of the Mexican troops, and next began blockading the river. Upon his persistent refusal to withdraw to the line of the Nueces, the Mexican general, Arista, sent a military force across the Rio Grande. Collision and bloodshed were inevitable; and a small reconnoitring party of Americans being soon after attacked by a larger Mexican force and captured, with a trifling loss in killed and wounded, the United States literally put the onus upon Mexico of striking the first blow and shedding the first blood. But the real cause of war consisted, as Mexico well claimed, in Taylor's position at the Rio Grande which he refused to quit. Indeed, it resulted readily from his plans that, after the well-fought fields of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, our conquering general crossed the Rio Grande and took Matamoras before he could possibly have learned whether Congress would declare offensive war.

March.

April.

April 23.

May 8–9.

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Neither troops nor squadrons on the frontier and coast of Mexico bearing the stars and stripes could terrify Paredes or give imposing consequence to Slidell's fruitless mission. Returning to New Orleans, Slidell reported by letter his ill success.* And now it was left for the wolf to proclaim to the American people how the lamb had polluted the waters. Polk's ferocious war message was transmitted to Congress on the 11th of May, with its howling catalogue of grievances. Mexico had refused to negotiate with an envoy sent to her with full power to adjust every difference, and settle all boundary difficulties on the most indulgent terms. Mexico's continued and unredressed wrongs committed upon the persons and property of American citizens cried out against her.† All this was enough to exhaust the cup of forbearance; but now "Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory, and shed American blood upon the American soil." "War exists, and notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself."‡

April.

May 11.

This was an ingenious plea to the country, and it had its full effect, though not a word of allusion had been made to the scheme for annexing more Mexican territory. Congress resolved at once a formal declaration of the war as already existing "by the act of Mexico."§ It was enough that Taylor's gallant little army was in peril,

May 12-13.

* 1 Curtis's Webster, chap. 21.

† We have shown how Mexico strained to pay all she was bound to pay under her treaty, until the Texas annexation fairly excused her. *Supra*, p. 523. See, also, 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13, for details. Mexico's feeble condition pleaded for mercy. A second arbitration convention had been concluded in 1843 to dispose of outlawed claims against Mexico, and Mexican claims in return against the United States. Mexico ratified; but in the United States Senate the treaty was altered and in its mutilated state no further notice was taken of it. Yet Polk unfairly asserted, in his message of December 8, 1846, that Mexico had violated her faith in this respect. 8 H. H. Bancroft, ib.

‡ President's Message, May 11, 1846; Congressional Debates.

§ Act May 13, 1846.

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for all the President's wishes to be promptly and harmoniously complied with. Congress authorized a call for fifty thousand volunteers, one-half of them to be immediately mustered into the service and the remainder kept as a reserve; ten million dollars out of the Treasury surplus of twelve millions were appropriated to begin operations with, and expenditures aggregating more than fifty millions were authorized before the session came to an end. To the call for volunteers our people quickly responded. The heart-beat was passionate in all sections but New England,—"our country, right or wrong."

May.

While our commander, General Taylor, after crossing the Rio Grande, struck for the interior of Mexico, summary possession was taken of the territories for which the eagle's eye had glistened. New Mexico and California were the new prey. General Kearney, at the head of a competent force, marched upon Santa Fé, the capital of New Mexico, that ancient town for which so many Texas-American invasions had been equipped. No formal opposition being offered, he hoisted the American flag and by authority of President Polk proclaimed New Mexico a part of the United States. Military possession was secured by the appointment of civil officers to govern the territory. Leaving a strong garrison at Santa Fé, Kearney ordered a portion of his command, under Colonel Doniphan, to join General Wool at Chihuahua, and then with a small force he started for California.

Aug. 18.

Wool's invasion of the neighboring provinces of Coahuila and Chihuahua, west of the Rio Grande, was for military effect simply; but California, the lamb of golden fleece, made the chief prize of our rapine. Borne off from its mother's arms without a struggle, this Pacific province was almost as easily seized as New Mexico. The whole story of California's conquest is one of utter disregard for Mexican rights of jurisdiction over Mexican soil. As part of the late swarming movement we have mentioned, from the region of Missouri across the Rocky Mountains, many of our pioneer settlers had in preference to inclement Oregon

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chosen the beautiful and undulating country of upper California. Almost simultaneously with President Tyler's intrigue to acquire Texas, or perhaps slightly earlier, these American immigrants began to arrive in the Pacific coast province, and the natives treated them kindly. The Mexican republic tried in vain* to close the gate upon the dangerous new-comers. This vastly significant feat of carrying the Anglo-American race beyond the last mountain barriers west of the Mississippi and planting it firmly on the remote ocean shore was, so Benton has alleged, an act not of the American government, but of the people, which compelled the government to follow.† And with some reference to this momentous achievement, though the importance of his mission has been much exaggerated, young John C. Fremont, Benton's son-in-law, who was a young and daring lieutenant of the army, promoted soon to a captaincy, made three exploring expeditions into the vast and almost unknown interior of this immense slope, a large tract of which was ours by good right already. Oregon was the ultimate direction to which Fremont's first expedition bore; and he left the mouth of the Kansas River by a route familiar to Oregon trappers and emigrants, and proceeded up the Platte, and past Fort Laramie to the South Pass. This was the occasion on which our pathfinder, or scientific explorer rather, climbed to the top of the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains; a mere incident, of course, but one which took strong hold of the popular imagination. Fremont's second expedition in 1843 was of much more consequence: it involved military preparations, and is said to have had military objects in view; and, more than this, Benton relates that the administration actually tried to countermand the young officer's orders, but he was hurried off by a stratagem of his wife before the countermand could reach him.‡ His new route struck farther south; on his way to our outposts on the

1843–45.

1842. June–September.

1843. June–November.

* By an order of September, 1845.

† 2 Benton's View, 468.

‡ 2 Benton, 478, 579.

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Columbia he turned aside and explored the Great Salt Lake of what is now Utah Territory; and completing, finally, his overland survey he connected it with Wilkes, the naval explorer. He made a boat trip down the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver and back before starting homeward; and it was upon his homeward journey that he explored in California, having embarked upon some mythical river which was believed to flow into San Francisco Bay. Enduring with his men many winter perils among the snow-capped heights of the Nevadas, he at length reached a frontier fort, and came back to his starting-point in midsummer by following the trail of the Santa Fé caravans. Fremont's California exploration was only an incident of this second expedition, nor had he any important connection with the secret plans of President Tyler which looked to its conquest; and yet the Missourians whose influence procured the expedition had some secret purpose, if Benton, who ought to know, relates truly; and outside the great work of geographical survey on which the government engaged him, there is reason to think that he was a mysterious forerunner of those north-western settlers whose more immediate purpose had been to forestall the British occupation of Oregon and who shared in the ambition of southern Democrats to realize our "manifest destiny" on the Pacific slope, though without the design which these latter cherished of increasing the area of American slavery.*

1843. November.

1844. July.

Full of energy and fire (for he had the French dash in his composition) and disposed to assume authority which was not conferred upon him, Fremont was presently in California on a third exploration, with armed followers, when he received orders to co-operate with other secret agents of the United States who were preparing to detach that province from Mexico when the ripe moment should arrive, peaceably, however, if this were possible. But as affairs turned, he soon figured in a

1846. January-May.

* See 16 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 19; 2 Benton, 478, 579, etc.; 69 Niles, 43, 75.

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revolutionary movement not probably in obedience, but in disobedience, of his orders from Washington.* Secret instructions, in fact, had issued from Buchanan and the State department months before Congress declared war with Mexico, and the object of these instructions was to seduce California from allegiance to the Mexican republic by soft and friendly approaches.† Off the Pacific our naval squadrons had long been watching for the emergency to arrive which would justify another pounce upon the Californian seaports, such as Commodore Jones had made so prematurely at Monterey.‡ One justifying emergency would have been the war now imminent between the two republics; the other, an attempt of any kind on the part of England or France to take possession of the pleasant land. The popular surmise which served as a constant bait in these days to American cupidity, was that England cherished a distinct design of seizing and occupying California for herself. That bugbear may now be dismissed; for if there was foundation for any such suspicions at all, it was that some protectorate under British auspices, or a guarantee of some kind to California, might prevent that country from falling into the lap of the United States as Texas had fallen. Even of the latter plan no positive evidence whatever exists.§ It is unquestionable, we admit, that British apprehensions were greatly excited at the idea that our advancing grasp should embrace California, with its commercial proximity to China and the East Indies; and yet the fair-minded and failing ministry of Peel was the last of all British ministries to have entangled itself with the affairs of the North American continent. Already had Texas annexation been accomplished against its baffling influence, and the ablest efforts of Peel's diplomacy could not even now avert a sacrifice of British interest in the

* 17 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 1.

† 16 ib., chap. 19; Buchanan's secret instructions to Larkin, Lieutenant Gillespie, etc.

‡ *Supra*, p. 445.

§ See 17 H. H. Bancroft, 208, etc., where this whole subject is carefully examined.

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Columbia River. While England, in short, made no secret of opposing all further aggrandizement by the American Union, so far as subtle and indirect effort short of offence and open rupture could give effect to her wishes, she felt the hopelessness of bracing up so weak a power as Mexico, that childish experimenter in self-government. Silently she retreated before the thunders of the Monroe doctrine,* and in the South American republics, whose dissensions were ignored by the United States, both England and France sought their safer compensation.

No candid person can read of the seizure of romantic California, this land of bright fertility and treasures happily hidden, without feeling impressed by the coarse contempt for everything like native rights which our American conquerors displayed. To them it was a modern Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, set apart to be possessed by God's chosen people. The Californians were looked upon as a degraded race, too few in number and too cowardly withal to make their claims respected or even obvious to mankind. Such was Fremont's view of the situation, when he defied Castro, the Mexican governor, and co-operated in the revolt of our newly-arrived American settlers, who were pretending to struggle against oppression. He greatly incensed the native Californians by his ambitious and needless interference. Interference it was, for his orders from the Polk administration gave him no such military discretion as he exercised; ambitious interference, for, knowing well what was our ultimate wish and design, he struck for popularity with his countrymen, and did not miscalculate; and needless interference, inasmuch as the drift to war with Mexico made the conquest sure by regular military occupation. There were sealed orders, secret orders, borne in those days by army and navy officers of rank and by civilian spies. Captain Fremont's success was all the easier in consequence, for while his premature operations puzzled other American agents,

* See President Polk's Annual Message, December, 1845, which asserted this doctrine as to North but not South America.

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who had secret instructions of their own, they thought it possible that, instead of being disobedient, his credentials gave a broader scope than theirs.* The secret instructions of one Larkin, a foreign consul whom President Polk selected for a confidential agent in October, 1845, betrayed the crafty purpose which Polk's administration entertained at the moment that it was moving heaven and earth to get Slidell into the Mexican circle that he might consummate a purchase.† This Larkin was told to warn the people of California against the evils of all attempts at European interference, an interference which the United States would not permit; to impress upon them the advantages of liberty under the stars and stripes, while assuring them, at the same time, that could they but assert and maintain their independence from Mexico we would welcome them either as a sister republic or a component part of the great Union; and all this, finally, he should do without awakening the suspicion or jealousy of other diplomatic powers.‡ This was the chalky tone of persuasion; but when the war with Mexico had actually begun, another tone served the wolf better, and new secret agents. For this alternative other instructions from our Navy department simultaneous with those to Larkin, or even earlier,§ prepared the way for action. Commodore Sloat, of the American navy, who commanded the Pacific squadron, was to possess himself of San Francisco and all other California ports, whenever he should learn that actual hostilities between Mexico and the United States had begun. Sloat was an aged officer, about to retire from the service, indecisive about taking such perilous responsibilities and disposed to construe his orders cautiously. In May, 1846, came the crisis of war; and the new instructions then

1845. October.

1846. May.

* See 17 H. H. Bancroft, chaps. 1, 8. † *Supra*, p. 524.

‡ Secretary Buchanan's instructions to Larkin, October 17, 1845, cited in H. H. Bancroft, p. 55. Gillespie did not reach him with these instructions until April 17, 1846.

§ Secretary Bancroft's instructions to Commodore Sloat, June 24 and October 17, 1845, cited 17 H. H. Bancroft, p. 195.

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issued from Washington, naval and military, enjoined the occupation of California by sea and land in plain and peremptory terms. These instructions showed, moreover, quite plainly, that more than a temporary occupation while the war should last was intended. In a word, the United States meant constantly to acquire California by one means or another, only that for many months it was not clear just what those means should be.* Sloat's blow, of course, was to be struck without waiting for the tedious arrival of the official news or official instructions of May. He waited after hearing the tidings of blood spilled at the Rio Grande; he wavered, he hesitated even when he knew that General Taylor had crossed the river to Matamoras; and despatches he sent home while waiting for more positive proof and positive authority cost him a reprimand which fortunately was neutralized by his decision to act long before the censure could reach him. The entreaties of his brother officers braced him up, the news, too, that Vera Cruz was blockaded, and, finally, as it has been claimed, this very revolt of settlers which Fremont had been assisting, and for which the blame might be put upon Fremont's shoulders. Possibly the fear operated, besides, that the British admiral, Seymour, who was hovering about the California coast, would seize the prize before him.† Sailing, therefore, from Mazatlan, Commodore Sloat arrived at Monterey about the 1st of July, where his last fit of indecision came and was shaken off, and on the 7th he formally demanded that port, where the Mexican flag had not been flying for two months. Monterey was peaceably surrendered, a proclamation conciliatory to the inhabitants of California was issued, and the stars and stripes were hoisted. San Francisco and the other chief ports on the coast succumbed in like manner. There

June–July.

July 1, 2.
July 7.

July 9.

* Instructions, May, June, 1846, cited 17 H. H. Bancroft, p. 197.

† A romantic legend to the effect that Sloat raced with the British admiral, and snatched California just in time to save it from England, is finally laid at rest in 17 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 9.

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was no struggle, no glowing incident attending this transfer of the golden land from the Mexican sovereignty to ours, which proved, and was designed to be, permanent.*

So far, then, as the acquisition was concerned for which this war was prosecuted, the foreign territory was ours, with scarcely the loss of a human life. For our foe, the weakness of her central energy at the borders of her dominion was painfully apparent. Of too great disparity to be thought heroic to our arms, this Mexican war unrolled its bloody consequences like the siege of Troy. Beginning in a sort of thumb-screw pressure, President Polk had no wish to protract the agony of this unfortunate sister longer than was needful to secure a parchment surrender of the soil in due form. His cabinet advisers had been found united at the outset for declaring war, and yet privately confident at the same time that there would be no war, that in "ninety or one hundred days" peace would be signed and all the purposes attained.† "It is impossible," writes Benton, "to conceive of an administration less warlike or more intriguing than that of Polk. They were men of peace, with objects to be accomplished by means of war; so that war was a necessity and indispensable to their purpose; but they wanted no more of it than would answer their purpose."‡ This accords with all other indications; and, in fact, almost simultaneously with the announcement of war a new intrigue was started for the restoration of peace. This intrigue was to manage the revolutionary factions at the Mexican capital so as to restore the exiled Santa Anna to power and then purchase a peace through his gratitude. On the very day that Congress

* 17 H. H. Bancroft, chaps. 9–10. Commodore Sloat sailed for home July 29, being succeeded by Commodore Stockton, who had no timid fears about assuming a responsibility. The completion of the conquest by Stockton and Fremont, and their quarrels with General Kearney, when the latter came to assume command (January–May) will be noticed in our next volume; and see H. H. Bancroft, chaps. 11–17.

† 2 Benton, 680.

‡ Ib.

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declared war, secret orders were issued to the commander of the American blockading forces in the Gulf not to obstruct Santa Anna's passage should he attempt to return to Mexico.* Paredes, the new President of Mexico, was not strongly seated, and the "maimed warrior" plotted at Havana his overthrow. Rumors are not wanting of a corrupt arrangement between Polk's administration and the illustrious exile, but they have been officially denied; and our President explained that his orders were issued as a stroke of policy,—that is to say, in the hope of promoting revolutionary discord in Mexico. We doubt whether this is the whole of it. Benton relates a confession from the President's own lips, that another Slidell was despatched to sound the hero at Havana,† while the President's organ, after a quibbling denial that the pass had been given, admitted that Santa Anna had made some overtures for co-operation.‡ Be all this as it may, the Mexican war had not lasted three months before Santa Anna sailed from Cuba with his suite, and through the connivance of our blockading fleet, in pursuance of the President's orders, sailed into Vera Cruz harbor unmolested in a British steamer. He landed; he at once placed himself at the head of a new revolution; and Paredes being very quickly overthrown and banished, the wooden-legged warrior re-entered his fickle capital amid acclamations, cannon, and the merry peal of bells; and this "soldier of the people," as he proudly styled himself, ruled the republic to which less than two years earlier he had been forbidden to return under penalty of death.§ It soon proved that Polk's administration had

1846. May 13.

Aug. 8–16.

Sept. 14.

* President's Message, Dec. 1846; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 301.

† 2 Benton, 560, 681. Commander Slidell Mackenzie, of the navy, brother of John Slidell, was the same officer who had hanged Secretary Spencer's son for an alleged mutiny. *Supra*, p. 454. His queer and almost crazy folly in this mission defeated its purpose; and through some "sounder head," with the quality of secrecy, the mode of Santa Anna's return, so Benton thinks, was arranged. Ib.

‡ See Washington Union, cited in 2 Benton, 681.

§ 8 H. H. Bancroft, 301–318; 71 Niles, etc.

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blundered in helping to bring all this about, for now we had to fight with the ablest, if not the most unprincipled, of all Mexico's political warriors. Santa Anna swam the topmost crest of the war passion, which was raging at its full height. He detailed the civil administration to others, took the field at once as military commander-in-chief, and infused all the vigor possible into the preparations which were making to resist the approach of the American invaders. Avaricious, dissipated, and weak in moral purpose though he certainly was, Santa Anna loved his native land and was ambitious for its prosperity as part of his own; and hence, in his very vices, he naturally leaned to the side of his country and his people and was treacherous only to those who cast their shadow between him and them. Such men grow up in every republic, and the more military their tastes and disposition the less likely are they to prefer foreign bribes to the resources of their own public treasury, or to save their soil from being drenched by purchasing for their country a craven and perfidious peace. Though ambitious of glory, they know that glory comes from saving or extending their national confines, not from contracting them. Aug.-Sept.

Polk's administration looked anxiously on as the new revolution progressed in Mexico, building for a few weeks upon their false hopes; but the truth soon dawned upon them. In early October announcement was made through the official organ that proposals for peace had failed, and that we must prosecute the war more vigorously on our part and press home upon this obstinate people.* We had made our proposals of peace; for Secretary Buchanan, in latter July,—curiously, too, just as Santa Anna was about to sail from Cuba, and without the hint of an overture from Paredes,—had sent a letter to the Mexican government offering to open negotiations in a "frank and friendly spirit," Aug.-Sept. October. July 27.

* Washington Union, Oct. 2; 71 Niles, 87.

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and to send or receive an envoy for that purpose.* That letter passed through our blockading squadron at Vera Cruz ten days behind the subverter of Paredes,† and the proposition received from Santa Anna's government a dilatory response which meant a polite refusal.‡ A week after the letter had been despatched, however, Polk confidentially addressed the Senate, and afterwards both Houses in a public message, asking for aid in bringing the war to a close and adjusting boundaries with Mexico.§ It was an appeal for money based upon nothing but imaginary hopes, if no understanding with Santa Anna existed. A House bill was accordingly reported to appropriate $2,000,000 for the President's purpose; but it was now late in the session, and in the discord arising from the effort to attach an anti-slavery proviso to the bill this appropriation, of no great consequence, was lost.|| The proviso which caused this failure we shall speak of again.

Aug. 25.

Aug. 4–6.

Congress rose on the 10th of August. British intervention took no terrible turn in the recess;¶ but a storm at home was gathering. The incoherence of political ideas which had helped this administration into power proved a source of weakness at the first stage of decisive action. The maw-worm of sectional greed had lodged at last in the stomach of the new Democracy. Polk, while faithful to the southern conditions which had made him a chosen instrument, proved himself, as might have been expected, a better fulfiller of his programme than a

August 10.

* President's confidential message, Aug. 4; 70 Niles, 387.

† See 71 Niles, 49. A reply from Mexico reached our blockading fleet September 6th, which Commodore Connor despatched to Washington September 19th.

‡ In effect, that the matter must await the assembling of the Mexican Congress in December. See 71 Niles.

§ Ex. Docs.; Cong. Debates; 70 Niles.

|| Ib.

¶ Mediation was very gently tendered by Great Britain to the United States. See 71 Niles, 50; quoting the queen's speech.

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political leader or calculator. In harmonizing the discordant elements he showed his want of skill and power to mould opinion. He had vetoed the river and harbor bill and French spoliations, which at such a strait could not seriously harm him; but his tariff policy exposed him to loud complaints of perfidy, the sub-treasury change fostered prejudice, and out of the distribution of patronage and the change of the official organ grew bitter heart-burnings among his late supporters. But the Mexican war was his heaviest burden; and by the time it became evident that Mexican soil could not be purchased by any means short of bloodshed and subjugation, reproach began to darken an administration whose methods and motives were detestable enough. Van Buren, Blair, Preston King, and many other northern Democrats joined the great body of Whigs in denouncing this war of lust and conquest, began under the flimsy pretext of settling doubtful boundaries. The zealots of the "Liberty party" repented the course they had lately taken; northern Whigs themselves began to divide into conscience and commercial Whigs, of whom the former resolved to resist all further encroachments of the slave-power. The young anti-slavery blood of New England utterly abominated this war;* and only a year earlier a young and handsome Bostonian of earnest abstractions, Charles Sumner, forsook the strain of complacent glorification usual in a fourth-of-July oration to denounce all war and all shedding of man's blood, declaring that "in this age there can be no peace which is not honorable and no war which is not dishonorable."† Even Tyler and Calhoun, who between them had first opened this Pandora's box to make scope for slavery, took the critical attitude; blaming Polk's indiscretion in precipitating the present war and insisting with a most ungrounded confidence that had the matter remained in their hands California might have

Aug. 3, 10.

1845. July 4.

1846.

* See the "Biglow Papers" of James Russell Lowell, which personify this sentiment.

† Newspapers of the day; 1 Pierce's Sumner.

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been coaxed out of Mexico without spilling a drop of blood.*

The State elections of 1846 showed the tide turning already against the administration. In New Hampshire, after an ardent contest, the opposition won, and by an alliance of Whigs and anti-slavery men in the legislature John P. Hale was chosen to the national Senate. Hannibal Hamlin, a member of the present House, nearly scored a like success in Maine. The fall elections in Maryland, New Jersey, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania all favored the Whigs; but their morning brightness shone out in New York, where they elected John Young, their candidate for governor, over Silas Wright by more than eleven thousand majority, a new State constitution being carried at the same time. The sturdy Wright in his new position had not enhanced his former fame, for he was not a man of executive methods and put prosy arguments into his proclamations which were ridiculed; but dying soon and suddenly after his defeat, which with the Mexican war and his anti-rent troubles at home had grieved him sadly, his tenderness and sincerity were well remembered by his fellow-citizens.†

1846.

May.

Oct.–Nov.

Congress reassembled in a peevish and censorious mood, as might well be imagined, yet fully determined that the war into which we had been plunged should be carried to a success at whatever cost. The annual message showed the administration on the defensive; to call this war unjust, unnecessary, an aggression on a weak and injured power, this, said the President, was giving "aid and comfort" to the enemy. But still the criticism went on, and many resolutions of inquiry were offered. Various financial bills were passed, and about $60,000,000 appropriated. Modern improvements made it needful to supply our navy with steam-vessels. Whatever the President needed for carrying on his war was liberally furnished. But while new officers and new

1846. Dec. 7–1847. March 3.

* 2 Tyler's Tyler. † Jenkins's Silas Wright; local newspapers.

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men, money, supplies, all the sinews of war, were thus voted to the government, loans authorized, and heavy appropriations made, all of Polk's prudent recommendations for sustaining the national credit by an adequate revenue entirely failed. Not one dollar of additional income was provided. Congress would neither amend the tariff of the previous session nor the sub-treasury bill. The President proposed to place war duties on some of the new free-list articles, but a bill of that purport was rejected in the House by a large majority, and duties upon tea and coffee were negatived also.* Future enlistments were required to be for five years or the war.† Six per cent. treasury notes, running for one or two years, were authorized to the amount of $23,000,000‡ for pressing exigencies, in addition to the longer loans; and by emissions of this kind and his "war warrants" Secretary Walker supplied in some sense the want of a national currency and relieved local banks of deposit from the heavy strain which was made by the metallic hoard that government gathered under the new sub-treasury act. Our foreign exchanges were kept in good order by reason of the enormous quantity and high prices of our American bread-stuffs and provisions which were shipped abroad in this eventful year of British famine and free trade.

One source of serious concern to the Democracy in this Mexican war was the military reputations it made for men outside their own school of politics. At the first breath of hostilities, old feuds, old jealousies, broke out among the ranking generals of the army. The superannuated Gaines, who had begun by claiming as a right the command of the invading expedition to the Rio Grande, ended by being court-martialled for making unauthorized enlistments, but his public zeal excused him and he was gently set aside.§ Gaines had offended Winfield Scott, as well as the Secretary of War; and Scott in turn offended

* Cong. Debates; 72 Niles.
† Act Jan. 12, 1847.
‡ Act Jan. 28, 1847.
§ 70 Niles, 279.

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the President by his peremptory claims to command in the field.* Taylor was promoted to a major-general; and then Worth, an able officer, who felt aggrieved, sent in his resignation, but recalled it and went gallantly into the fight. Fairly winning the earliest laurels, Zachary Taylor struck the popular chord by his prompt and skilful strategy, his plain bearing, and a sort of brief and succinct style in his official despatches which showed him to be a man of sense and energy. But Taylor, though a modest professional soldier, happened to be a Whig as well as Scott; nor had his campaign gone far at the Rio Grande before the Whig politicians hailed him as their coming man, and began to sound him for President. Warned by his rising star, the administration gave more heed to Winfield Scott, a Presidential aspirant of long standing, who had chafed for months under slights which the public imputed very quickly to political jealousy. Scott was highest in point of military rank, and full of pride and ambition; so Scott at last was sent to the front to draw Taylor's troops from him and lead the march to Mexico.

1846. Nov.–Dec.

Unfortunately for the Democrats, there was furnished no opportunity to bring out Democratic generals of surpassing lustre; Pillow, Quitman, Shields, the amiable Franklin Pierce, these and others were commissioned under the new authority of Congress; but the older list kept the lead. In the desperation, indeed, of the party who had made the war, a scheme was concerted for creating a lieutenant-general who should outrank all other officers in the field. Benton was the man proposed in this connection, for his support as an anti-Texas man laid Polk under peculiar obligations.† But the plan miscarried in the Senate after passing the ordeal of the House.‡ Named a new major-general as the law now stood, Missouri's senator inquired

* 1 Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 21; 70 Niles.

† Benton, though a veteran senator, had once been a colonel in the army.

‡ Benton says that three of the President's cabinet—Marcy, Walker, and Buchanan—covertly defeated it. 2 Benton, 675.

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whether the President would give him the chief command in the field; and finding that this could not be, for Scott was already commencing operations at Vera Cruz, he haughtily refused his commission,* and under Whig generals the war was fought out to the end. 1847. March.

The prompt admission of Texas as a slave State had made the free North anxious to restore the equilibrium of power. Iowa now entered the Union under a new act changing the boundary line which had been so unacceptable to its inhabitants.† Wisconsin, too, by an act of this second session was rather prematurely admitted.‡ The northern alarm at the new expansion of slave area promised by this war appeared more clearly still at both sessions in turn, when the appropriation came up in the House to enable the President to purchase a peace. The first appropriation sought, as we have seen, was $2,000,000;§ and to this was tacked by the vote of Whigs and anti-slavery Democrats a proviso that slavery should be forever forbidden in any soil purchased with that money. This "Wilmot proviso," renowned in the history of these slavery times, took its name from the man who first introduced it, a Pennsylvania judge of moderate abilities, and one of the new members in this House who gained some early praise as a true friend of the South, because he voted, solitary and alone, among the Pennsylvania delegation, for the Polk tariff bill. The wrath of the South and the administration, which appeared the moment his proviso was proposed, revealed the true design of this war as a war for the annexation of new slave territory. In fact, Tyler and Polk and their most moderate southern supporters, who professed to have the welfare 1846. December. 1845. August.

* 72 Niles, 18.

† *Supra*, p. 489. Acts August 4, 1846, chap. 82; Dec. 28, 1846.

‡ Act March 3, 1847, chap. 53. The assent of the people to a constitution already adopted at Madison in December, 1846, was made a condition to this admission. The condition failed, and by the later act of May 29, 1848, Wisconsin was admitted after the Mexican war under a different State constitution.

§ *Supra*, p. 538.

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of the whole Union at heart, appear to have thought that the repose of North and South after dismembering Mexico would be gained by extending the old compromise line of 36° 30′ westward to the Pacific Ocean.* That parallel was supposed somehow to set the geographical limit between profitable and unprofitable slave-labor; and this, too, in spite of the ominous circumstance that five slave States lay already to the north of it. The Wilmot proviso was carried in the House at the first session, but the appropriation failed in consequence.† At the second session the President's friends introduced a similar bill, with the sum raised from $2,000,000 to $3,000,000, and they pressed its passage anew. Once more, however, the Whigs dropped the apple of discord, encouraged this time by resolutions from great northern States like New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, for this proviso took a strong hold upon the northern people very quickly. The House appropriated $3,000,000, with the Wilmot rider attached.‡ But the Senate, which had been discussing a $3,000,000 bill of its own, unhorsed this rider and sent the bill back; and after fruitless efforts to adjust the difference by two committees of conference, the House finally yielded the naked appropriation.§ Never, in such a fraternal era, could legislation against the peace of the Union survive these bargaining days of the alternate March; and yet that Gorgon head of a Wilmot proviso was to be held up again.

1846.

1847. February.

Feb. 15.

February. March.

Mar. 2, 3.

At the outset of our next and concluding volume we

* See 8 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 13; 2 Curtis's Buchanan, chap. 21; 2 Tyler, 416.

† Cong. Debates; 70 Niles.

‡ Cong. Debates. The vote stood 115 to 105.

§ See Cong. Debates; 72 Niles; Act March 3, 1847, chap. 50. The Senate voted, March 1st, to strike out the Wilmot proviso by 21 to 31, and the appropriation passed March 2d, by 29 to 24. In the House, March 3d, the Wilmot proviso was rejected by 102 to 92, and the bill passed by 115 to 81.

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shall describe the purely military events of the Mexican war. But here, before closing the narrative, let us glance for a moment at a few impressive facts pertaining to the social condition of the United States at this critical period. It was no longer possible, as affairs were now tending, to stifle discussion on the slavery question. North and South had taken up each its own line of argument as to the right or wrong of the institution; Calhoun had influenced the younger fellow-planters of his State and section already to drop apology and assume the proselyting tone; and a South Carolina governor was now seen following up Calhoun's challenge to Europe, by vindicating the right to hold negroes in subjection, in a series of open letters addressed to Clarkson, the English philanthropist. Our Protestant churches were splitting apart on that question; the Methodists, North and South, divided, the Baptists also, while Presbyterians, old and new, were deeply agitated. Abolitionists at the North were, meanwhile, repudiating church affiliations altogether,—infidels, as many avowed themselves,—because impatient that God should suffer such an evil to exist; and in the annual meetings of the American Anti-Slavery Society the tenor of discussion among the chief leaders favored, as the true exodus, a dissolution of the Union, and the overthrow of these church organizations called Christian, whose pulpits were a constant barricade to freedom.* 1845–47.

Religious statistics in these times were loosely made up, and one cannot fully trust them; some denominations based their reports upon attendance, others upon communion; but the Methodists appeared then to be, as ever since, the largest body of worshippers in the United States; in point of numbers, the Baptists, with less cohesion and discipline, standing second. Roman Catholics had begun a rapid growth, doubling the number of their priests and churches in twelve years,† a fact which alarmed native Americans, who looked upon it as a foreign excrescence

* See local reports in newspapers, May, 1845, etc.

† American Almanac, 1846.

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built up by the Roman pontiff. In the Episcopal Church was reflected the image of the new Puseyite or Tractarian revival of England, whose worthiest fruit was the stirring up of missionary endeavors among the poor. "No popery!" was the present cry against its mediæval tendencies. And already the awakened mind of the century, predisposed to religious doubts and fantasies, tossed on the wave of agitation and unrest. The stolid common sense and conservatism of the average English mind imbued less and less the American temperament as years developed. Every ambitious and turbulent organizer who seemed in earnest found followers here eager for some new excitement, some discovery.

To this mental feverishness in American life, this discontent with the hard realities of social existence, this disposition to embrace new ideals and new experiments, we have made some allusion already.* We have alluded, too, to Joe Smith, the Mormon prophet, who founded a religious sect upon the supposed inspiration of an American bible, dug up like the bones of the mastodon, and led out his people into the Missouri wilderness.† This Mormon battalion of saints, taking up its new line of march to the region which we were now engaged in wresting from Mexico, is a feature of the migration at this period westward of the Rocky Mountains whose significance was far beyond what the American of Polk's day could realize. Let us for a moment dwell upon the cause of it. No religious sect founded within the memory of man has grown into so extraordinary a force, and one so hostile to its external surroundings, as that of the Mormons or Latter-Day Saints; and this most of all, perhaps, because it met both the sensual and spiritual yearnings of the discontented and down-trodden, and embodied in its faith and teachings the romance of American emigration. Joseph Smith, the founder, was an American of the common people, with the commonest of surnames, the offspring of a shiftless family of border settlers, a plain mechanic, and yet withal a shrewd

* *Supra*, p. 311, 312.

† Ib.

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and careful organizer, if not a genius. Like Mohammed, he built up a sect opposed to all other social forces in their midst, and gave to his people an inspired book which linked their history with that of the early Hebrews and the sacred revelations. For the Book of Mormon gave to America a pristine record, pristine associations with the tower of Babel and Christ's appearance, far antedating the European discoveries under Ferdinand and Isabella. But while American colonization inspired this new sect, it drew from Europe, from foreign lands, to bind up the whole political fabric into a theocracy which was communistic in appearance. Fanatic and enthusiast though he may have been, and not a knave,—for he seemed really to consider himself God's chosen instrument,—Smith founded a faith which accorded well with our favorite patriotic idea of territorial expansion; with a millennium here at hand, the New Jerusalem in the heart of the American continent; the land of promise in the far West; but it was part of his creed to manage well the material concerns of his people as they fed their flocks and raised their produce, enjoining it upon them, as articles of their creed, to remain subject to the higher powers of the Church and not be idle or lazy. Under such an administration, so unusual to community life, the Mormons first attracted national notice about the time they quitted Missouri to escape persecution and took refuge in Illinois. In that free State a tract of land was granted them and a charter too carelessly liberal in terms. The whole body, already numbering about fifteen thousand, gathered into a new city of their own, which their prophet, in obedience to a revelation, named Nauvoo; here a body of militia was formed under the name of the Nauvoo legion; and Joe Smith, as mayor, military commander, and supreme head of the Church, exerted an authority almost despotic. The wilderness blossomed and rejoiced, and on a lofty height of this holy city was begun a grotesque temple, built of limestone, with huge monolithic pillars which displayed carvings of moons and suns. Smith thought himself greater than King Solomon, because he built all this without gold and silver treasures. This

1842–44.

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Nauvoo was well laid out, with wide streets which sloped towards well-cultivated farms; all was thrift and sobriety, no spirituous liquors were drunk, and the colonists here, as in their former settlements, furnished the pattern of insect industry. The wonderful proselyting work, of this new sect abroad had already begun and recruits came over from the overplus toilers in the British factory towns. Religious zeal was made subsidiary to the practical work, and over all dominated the mind of the prophet. But there was something in the methods of this sect, not to speak of the jealousy they excited by their prosperity, which bred them trouble here as everywhere else where they came in contact with American commonplace life. It was whispered that the hierarchy of impostors grew rich upon the toils of their simple followers. Polygamy had not yet received the sanction of a divine revelation; and yet the first step towards it was practised in the theory of "sealing wives" spiritually, which Smith had begun in some mysterious way that it baffled the gentile to discover. Sheriffs, too, were forbidden to serve civil process in Nauvoo without the written permission of its mayor. All these strange scandals of heathenish pranks, and more, besides, stirred up the neighboring gentiles, plain Illinois backwoodsmen; and the more so that, besides his three thousand militia, the Mormon prophet controlled six thousand votes, which, in the close Presidential canvass of 1844, might have been enough to decide the election. Joe Smith, indeed, whose Church nominated him for President, showed a fatal but thoroughly American disposition at this time to carry his power into politics. This king of plain speech, who dressed as a journeymen carpenter, suppressed a newspaper which was set up by seceding Mormons. When complaint was made he resisted Illinois process and proclaimed martial law; the citizens of the surrounding towns armed for a fight. Joe Smith was arrested and thrown into jail at Carthage with his brother Hiram. The rumor spreading that the governor was disposed to release these prisoners, a disorderly band gathered at the jail and shot them. Thus perished Smith,

1844.

June.

June 27.

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the Mormon founder. His death at first created terror and confusion among his followers, but Brigham Young, his successor, proved a man of great force and sagacity. The exasperated gentiles clamored loudly to expel these religious fanatics from Illinois as they had been expelled from Missouri; and finally, to prevent a civil war, the governor of the State took forcible possession of the holy city, with its unfinished temple, while the Mormon charter of Nauvoo was repealed by the legislature. The Mormons now determined upon the course which was most suited to their growth, and left American pioneer society to found their New Jerusalem on more enduring foundations west of the Rocky Mountains. And now, a few months after war had been declared with Mexico, and while Stockton and Fremont were completing the conquest of California, we see this singular people, which had endured martyrdom and persecution, collecting in a large force at Council Bluffs. Their train moves slowly towards the setting sun and Nauvoo relapses into a wilderness. Their westward migration by sea and land had begun in the spring; California was the spot Brigham Young and his followers had first fixed upon, and this while yet their national status was uncertain; but circumstances did not favor this selection, and after many wanderings they settled down in the valley of the Great Salt Lake about the time the Mexican war ended, and, far away from all other settlers, they remained for many years unmolested.*

1845.

1846.

1846. September.

1847–48.

The Mexican war was fought in a region where the new system of railway, still less of telegraphic connection, had found no development. By the time that war had fairly begun some twelve hundred miles of telegraph were in operation under Kendall's energetic operation; but its chief spread was northward from Washington into the populous Middle and Eastern States. War news were thus disseminated, but not official despatches be-

1846. September.

* Quincy's Figures of the Past, 376; 66 Niles; local newspapers; 17 H. H. Bancroft, chap. 18.

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tween our capital and the seat of war. But as this Congress had the honor of establishing, after long delay, the Smithsonian Institution, in the interest of science,* so had its predecessor accomplished something in the direction of increasing the popularity and usefulness of the post-office.† Rowland Hill's reforms in England, and the new enterprise of the electric telegraph, which the United States was asked to buy out, but did not, lent a strong impulse in the direction of cheap postage. In place of the old letter rates graded from 6 to 25 cents for each piece of paper according to a table of graded distances, new rates nearly uniform were fixed by weight at 5 cents per half-ounce for less than 300 miles, and 10 cents for longer distances. Private expresses had carried much mail matter, because of their responsibility and greater swiftness, but the new law monopolized the business for the United States on all mail routes; prepayment, too, being now required, here as abroad, postage-stamps came soon into use. With the era of the Mexican war the long and carefully-written letter package, folded over and sealed, began to decline; while the Morse invention, though useless for our military and naval operations, was found at once of great benefit in aiding the arrest of fugitives, and affording to our busy merchants the latest price quotations and the latest foreign arrivals, and the latest intelligence, besides, which reached Washington from the far-off battle-fields.

* Act August 10, 1846; *supra*, p. 353.

† Act March 3, 1845, chap. 43; also, act March 1, 1847.

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APPENDIX.

A. ELECTORAL VOTE BY STATES FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT, 1831–1847.

ELECTORAL VOTE OF 1832.

	States.	President.					Vice-President.						Total.
		A. Jackson, of Tenn.	H. Clay, of Ky.	John Floyd, of Va.	Wm. Wirt, of Md.	Vacancies.	M. Van Buren, of N. Y.	John Sergeant, of Pa.	Wm. Wilkins, of Pa.	Henry Lee, of Mass.	Amos Ellmaker, of Pa.	Vacancies.	
1	Alabama	7			...		7						7
2	Connecticut		8					8					8
3	Delaware		3					3					3
4	Georgia	11					11						11
5	Illinois	5					5						5
6	Indiana	9					9						9
7	Kentucky		15					15					15
8	Louisiana	5					5						5
9	Maine	10					10						10
10	Maryland	3	5			2	3	5				2	10
11	Massachusetts		14					14					14
12	Mississippi	4					4						4
13	Missouri	4					4						4
14	New Hampshire	7					7						7
15	New Jersey	8					8						8
16	New York	42					42						42
17	North Carolina	15					15						15
18	Ohio	21					21						21
19	Pennsylvania	30							30				30
20	Rhode Island		4					4					4
21	South Carolina			11						11			11
22	Tennessee	15					15						15
23	Vermont				7						7		7
24	Virginia	23					23						23
	Total	219	49	11	7	2	189	49	30	11	7	2	288

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ELECTORAL VOTE OF 1836.

	States.	President.					* Vice-President.				Total.
		M. Van Buren, of N. Y.	W. H. Harrison, of Ohio.	Hugh L. White, of Tenn.	Daniel Webster, of Mass.	W. P. Mangum, of N. C.	R. M. Johnson, of Ky.	Fr. E. Granger, of N. Y.	John Tyler, of Va.	William Smith, of Ala.	
1	Alabama	7					7				7
2	Arkansas	3					3				3
3	Connecticut	8					8				8
4	Delaware		3					3			3
5	Georgia			11					11		11
6	Illinois	5					5				5
7	Indiana		9					9			9
8	Kentucky		15					15			15
9	Louisiana	5					5				5
10	Maine	10					10				10
11	Maryland		10						10		10
12	Massachusetts				14			14			14
13	Michigan	3					3				3
14	Mississippi	4					4				4
15	Missouri	4					4				4
16	New Hampshire	7					7				7
17	New Jersey		8					8			8
18	New York	42					42				42
19	North Carolina	15					15				15
20	Ohio		21					21			21
21	Pennsylvania	30					30				30
22	Rhode Island	4					4				4
23	South Carolina					11			11		11
24	Tennessee			15					15		15
25	Vermont		7					7			7
26	Virginia	23								23	23
	Total	170	73	26	14	11	147	77	47	23	294

* No candidate for Vice-President having received a majority of the votes cast, the Senate elected R. M. Johnson Vice-President.

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ELECTORAL VOTE OF 1840.

	States.	President.		Vice-President.				Total.
		W. H. Harrison, of Ohio.	M. Van Buren, of N. Y.	John Tyler, of Va.	R. M. Johnson, of Ky.	L. W. Tazewell, of Va.	J. K. Polk, of Tenn.	
1	Alabama		7		7			7
2	Arkansas		3		3			3
3	Connecticut	8		8				8
4	Delaware	3		3				3
5	Georgia	11		11				11
6	Illinois		5		5			5
7	Indiana	9		9				9
8	Kentucky	15		15				15
9	Louisiana	5		5				5
10	Maine	10		10				10
11	Maryland	10		10				10
12	Massachusetts	14		14				14
13	Michigan	3		3				3
14	Mississippi	4		4				4
15	Missouri		4		4			4
16	New Hampshire		7		7			7
17	New Jersey	8		8				8
18	New York	42		42				42
19	North Carolina	15		15				15
20	Ohio	21		21				21
21	Pennsylvania	30		30				30
22	Rhode Island	4		4				4
23	South Carolina		11			11		11
24	Tennessee	15		15				15
25	Vermont	7		7				7
26	Virginia		23		22		1	23
	Total	234	60	234	48	11	1	294

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ELECTORAL VOTE OF 1844.

	States.	President.		Vice-President.		Total.
		James K. Polk, of Tenn.	Henry Clay, of Ky.	G. M. Dallas, of Pa.	T. Frelinghuysen, of N. J.	
1	Alabama	9		9		9
2	Arkansas	3		3		3
3	Connecticut		6		6	6
4	Delaware		3		3	3
5	Georgia	10		10		10
6	Illinois	9		9		9
7	Indiana	12		12		12
8	Kentucky		12		12	12
9	Louisiana	6		6		6
10	Maine	9		9		9
11	Maryland		8		8	8
12	Massachusetts		12		12	12
13	Michigan	5		5		5
14	Mississippi	6		6		6
15	Missouri	7		7		7
16	New Hampshire	6		6		6
17	New Jersey		7		7	7
18	New York	36		36		36
19	North Carolina		11		11	11
20	Ohio		23		23	23
21	Pennsylvania	26		26		26
22	Rhode Island		4		4	4
23	South Carolina	9		9		9
24	Tennessee		13		13	13
25	Vermont		6		6	6
26	Virginia	17		17		17
	Total	170	105	170	105	275

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B. LENGTH OF SESSIONS OF CONGRESS, 1831–1847.

No. of Congress.	No. of Session.	TIME OF SESSION.
21st.	1st.	December 7th, 1829—May 31st, 1830.
	2d.	December 6th, 1830—March 3d, 1831.
22d.	1st.	December 5th, 1831—July 16th, 1832.
	2d.	December 3d, 1832—March 3d, 1833.
23d.	1st.	December 2d, 1833—June 30th, 1834.
	2d.	December 1st, 1834—March 3d, 1835.
24th.	1st.	December 2d, 1835—July 4th, 1836.
	2d.	December 5th, 1836—March 3d, 1837.
25th.	1st.	September 4th, 1837—October 16th, 1837.
	2d.	December 4th, 1837—July 9th, 1838.
	3d.	December 3d, 1838—March 3d, 1839.
26th.	1st.	December 2d, 1839—July 21st, 1840.
	2d.	December 7th, 1840—March 3d, 1841.
27th.	1st.	May 31st, 1841—September 13th, 1841.
	2d.	December 6th, 1841—August 31st, 1842.
	3d.	December 5th, 1842—March 3d, 1843.
28th.	1st.	December 4th, 1843—June 17th, 1844.
	2d.	December 2d, 1844—March 3d, 1845.
29th.	1st.	December 1st, 1845—August 10th, 1846.
	2d.	December 7th, 1846—March 3d, 1847.

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INDEX TO VOLUME IV.

Abolition. (See *Slavery.*)
Adams, John Quincy, Representative, iv, 42, 50, 99, 130, 183, 185, 226, 302, 322, 343, 353, 410, 424, 480, 481
American, traits and manners in 1831, iv, 1
"Amistad" case (see *Slave-Trade*), iv, 344
Anti-Masons, iv, 77, 84, 187, 192
Arkansas, iv, 229
Art, in 1831, iv, 19
Ashburton, Lord, iv, 400, 403
Assassination, attempted, iv, 179

Baltimore, in 1831, iv, 26
Bancroft, George, iv, 499, 501
Bank, National, iv, 44, 47, 68; removal of deposits, 132, 142, 145, 157, 168, 174, 182; downfall, 279, 293, 347, 379; new projects, 376, 383, 404, 416
Bankruptcy, iv, 416
Banks, local, iv, 258, 277, 293, 325, 345, 517
Barry, William T., iv, 32, 141, 188
Bell, John, iv, 167, 221, 327, 361, 386, 393
Benton, Thomas H., iv, 42, 50, 67, 70, 152, 238, 406, 470, 535, 542
Berrien, John M., iv, 32, 56, 386, 394
Biddle, Nicholas, iv, 48, 52, 71, 147, 168, 279, 293, 347
Birney, James G., iv, 342, 474
Blair, Francis P., iv, 133, 140, 190, 502, 539
Boston, in 1831, iv, 25, 119
Botts, John M., iv, 381, 391, 410
Boundaries, iv, 316, 396, 401, 504, 508, 513, 519
Branch, John, iv, 32
Buchanan, James, iv, 150, 180, 409, 502, 520
Bunker Hill Celebration, iv, 437
Butler, Benjamin F., iv, 143, 166

Calhoun, John C., Vice-President, iv, 36, 38, 40, 63, 86; Senator, 96, 98, 107, 109, 150, 223, 290, 417, 539; Secretary of State, 455, 458, 483, 500, 511
California, iv, 247, 445, 498, 528, 532
Cameron, Simon, iv, 511
Canada, iv, 317, 397
Canals, iv, 122
Capitol, iv, 148
Cass, Lewis, iv, 34, 138, 244, 275, 460, 467, 511, 512
Census, iv, 43
Cherokees (see *Indians*), iv, 233
Chicago, in 1831, iv, 28
China, iv, 436, 489
Cincinnati, in 1831, iv, 27
Cities, American, in 1831, iv, 22
Clay, Henry, Senator, iv, 43, 61, 70, 103, 107, 150, 157, 199, 290, 329, 361, 376, 378, 382, 392, 417; Presidential candidate, 432, 433, 460, 465, 471, 480
Clayton, John M., iv, 42, 102
Commerce, American, iv, 413
Congress, twenty-second, iv, 41, 71, 91; twenty-third, 148, 180, 254; twenty-fourth, 290, 237; twenty-fifth, 282, 289, 307; twenty-sixth, 320, 345; twenty-seventh, 376, 404; twenty-eighth, 451, 470, 480; twenty-ninth, 511, 538, 540
Convent, Ursuline, iv, 177
Convention, political, iv, 72, 76, 82, 199, 329, 334, 461, 466, 468
Corwin, Thomas, iv, 42, 149, 511
Cotton, iv, 57, 59, 412
Crittenden, John J., iv, 361, 393
Currency (see *Bank, Deposits*), iv, 171, 173, 257, 277, 289, 390, 517, 541
Cushing, Caleb, iv, 404, 425, 432, 436, 453, 489

Dallas, George M., iv, 42, 46, 276, 467, 516
Davis, John, iv, 105, 180, 188, 434
Debt, National, iv, 182, 230
Debt, State, iv, 346, 406, 418
Democrats, iv, 73, 192, 194
Deposits, public (see *Treasury*), iv, 132, 142, 157, 163, 175, 180, 257, 279, 283, 325, 517
Dickens, Charles, iv, 420
Distribution, surplus, etc., iv, 66, 152, 155, 230, 286, 378, 407, 410, 416
Dorr rebellion, iv, 462
Douglas, Stephen A., iv, 452
Duane, William J., iv, 118, 138, 141
Duelling, iv, 309

Eaton, John H., iv, 31, 36
Elections, Presidential, iv (1832), 82, 198; (1836), 235; (1840), 335, 340; (1844), 478, 480
Elections, State, and State political tendencies (1831), iv, 81; (1835–37), 198, 237; (1837–39), 287, 295; (1839–41), 342; (1841–43), 394, 434; (1844–45), 478; (1846–47), 540
Emancipation, British colonial, iv, 215. (See *Slavery.*)
Emerson, Ralph W., iv, 314
Europe, iv, 244. (See *France, Great Britain.*)
Everett, Edward, iv, 42, 149, 180, 400, 436, 501
Ewing, Thomas, iv, 42, 361, 380, 386, 393
Expunging resolution, iv, 238

Digitized by Google

Fillmore, Millard, iv, 411, 417
Fire, at Washington, iv, 117, 148; at New York, 263
Florida, iv, 319, 488
Force bill (see *Nullification*), iv, 101
Forsyth, John, iv, 42, 167, 303
Forward, Walter, iv, 393, 432
France, iv, 184, 239
Free trade, iv, 57, 64, 85. (See *Tariff.*)
Fremont, John C., iv, 529
Fugitives, iv, 298, 343, 428. (See *Slavery.*)

"Gag-rule," iv, 308, 424, 481. (See *Petition.*)
Garrison, William L., iv, 211, 213, 217
Georgia, iv, 232
Giddings, Joshua R., iv, 426
Gilmer, Thomas W., iv, 343, 373, 383, 387, 454, 455
Globe, Washington, iv, 144, 324, 440, 502
Granger, Francis E., iv, 198, 236, 361, 393
Great Britain, iv, 2, 215, 316, 396, 457, 504, 508, 513, 531
Greeley, Horace, iv, 333, 338

Harrison, William H., iv, 199, 236, 329, 335, 348, 359, 363, 365, 368
Hayne, Robert Y., iv, 42, 62, 93
Houston, Sam, iv, 251, 442, 448, 457, 520, 521

Inauguration of Jackson, iv, 113; of Van Buren, 274; of Harrison, 259; of Tyler, 367; of Polk, 495
Indians, iv, 36, 233, 319, 488
Ingham, Samuel D., iv, 33, 233
Internal improvements, iv, 155, 183
Iowa, iv, 488, 543

Jackson, Andrew, President, first term, iv, 31, 41, 108; President, second term, 112, 117, 132, 142, 157, 165, 179, 238, 251, 265, 270; in retirement, 274, 450, 470, 504; traits of character, 114, 265, 270
Johnson, Richard M., iv, 33, 50, 149, 187, 200, 236, 334, 349, 460, 467
Jones, Commodore, iv, 446
Journalism, American, iv, 144, 324, 356, 503
Judiciary, federal, iv, 70, 232, 344

Kearney, General, iv, 528
Kendall, Amos, iv, 133, 140, 159, 175, 188, 221, 271, 345, 504, 549

Lafayette, Marquis de, iv, 168
Land, public, iv, 66, 152
Legaré, Hugh S., iv, 393, 438
Liberty party, iv, 341, 474
Literature, American, iv, 354, 421
Livingston, Edward, iv, 34, 90, 117, 240, 244
Locomotives, iv, 127
Lovejoy, Elijah P., iv, 299
Lowell, factories, iv, 118, 414
Lundy, Benjamin, iv, 212, 250

Madison, James, iv, 232, 351
Maine, iv, 396, 399
Manufactures, American, iv, 411
Marcy, William L., iv, 42, 84, 226, 499
Marshall, John, iv, 232
Mason, John Y., iv, 42, 149, 455, 499
Massachusetts, iv, 31
McDuffie, George, iv, 42, 46, 149, 180, 483
McLane, Louis, iv, 34, 44, 117, 138, 167, 501
Mexico, iv, 248, 254, 304, 441, 451, 482, 521; war with, 525, 528, 536, 549
Michigan, iv, 229
Monroe, James, iv, 37
Monroe doctrine, iv, 532
Morgan, William (see *Anti-Masons*), iv, 77
Mormonism, iv, 312, 546

Negroes, free, iv, 206, 208. (See *Slavery.*)
New England, iv, 29
New Jersey, iv, 320
New Mexico, iv, 445, 528
New York city, iv, 22, 176, 200, 263, 419
New York State, iv, 464
Nullification, iv, 38, 85, 97, 107

Opera, in 1831, iv, 17
Oregon, iv, 401, 467, 498, 504, 508, 510, 529

Parties, political (see *Anti-Masons, Democrats, Republicans, Whigs*), iv, 288, 341, 439, 474
Patroon troubles, iv, 464
Petition, right of, iv, 224, 227, 300, 303, 308, 424, 481
Philadelphia, iv, 25, 177
Philippe, Louis, iv, 239, 240
Phillips, Wendell, iv, 300
Pierce, Franklin, iv, 149, 542
Poindexter, George, iv, 42, 180
Poinsett, Joel R., iv, 275
Polk, James K., iv, 42, 149, 167, 282, 310, 461, 467, 471, 479, 490; President, 495, 497, 516, 535
Post-Office, iv, 216, 221, 550
"Princeton" disaster, iv, 454
Protection to manufacturers, iv, 54, 59, 408, 410, 514

Railways, iv, 122, 125, 130, 131
Randolph, John, iv, 39
Religion, iv, 311, 545
Republicans, iv, 72, 76, 192
Repudiation (see *Debts*), iv, 418
Rhea, John, iv, 37
Rhode Island, iv, 462
Riots, iv, 178, 200, 202, 264, 308
Road, National, iv, 155
Rush, Richard, iv, 187, 353, 501

San Jacinto, iv, 253
Santa Anna, iv, 252, 255, 457, 486, 535
Science, iv, 20, 353
Scott, Winfield, iv, 89, 318, 330, 541
Seminoles, iv, 36, 319, 488
Sergeant, John, iv, 72, 386, 392, 394
Seward, William H., iv, 198, 295, 331, 342, 397, 434, 478, 482
Slavery, condition in 1831, iv, 203, 209; American Colonization Society, 208, 213; Southampton insurrection, 209; new abolition movement, 210, 218, 297, 423, 427, 475, 542, 545; British emancipation, 215; incendiary matter, 216, 219, 220, 296. (See *Liberty Party, Petition, Texas.*)

Digitized by Google

Slave-trade, iv, 343, 398, 401, 426
Slidell, John, iv, 524
Sloat, Commodore, iv, 533
Smith, Samuel, iv, 42
Socialism, iv, 312
Southampton insurrection, iv, 209
South Carolina, iv, 30, 39, 59, 85, 97, 107
Spanish-American republics, iv, 245, 532. (See *Mexico*, *Texas*.)
Specie circular, iv, 261, 265, 281, 290
Spencer, John C., iv, 393, 396, 433, 439, 454
Spoliations, French, iv, 184, 239, 306, 443, 523
Steamboats, iv, 122
Stevenson, Andrew, iv, 42, 149, 167, 180, 199
St. Louis, in 1831, iv, 28
Story, Joseph, iv, 502

Taney, Roger B., iv, 35, 138, 152, 164, 166, 175, 232, 495
Tariff, iv, 54, 59, 66; (compromise), 103; (Tyler), 407; (Polk), 514, 541
Taylor, General Zachary, iv, 523, 525, 542
Telegraph, iv, 354, 469, 549
Texas, iv, 247, 254, 302; intrigue to annex, 440, 444, 447, 457, 459, 465, 470; reannexation, 467, 476, 482, 484, 518, 521, 543
Theatre, in 1831, iv, 16
Thompson, George, iv, 215, 217
Tour, Presidential, iv, 118
Transcendentalism, iv, 313
Treasury, independent, iv, 283, 290, 310, 325, 378, 416, 517, 541
Treaty, iv, 306, 396, 436, 443, 489, 514
Tyler, John, Senator, etc., iv, 42, 104, 149, 170, 181; President, 330, 367, 376, 382, 403, 409, 430, 437, 468, 471, 487, 519, 539; character of, 370, 491

Upshur, Abel P., iv, 373, 406, 425, 438, 447, 455

Van Buren, Martin, Secretary of State, iv, 32; minister, 36, 73; Vice-President, 76, 113, 150, 163, 200, 236; President, 274, 303, 318, 334, 345; character, 349; in retirement, 460, 465, 467, 501, 539
Verplanck, Julian C., iv, 42, 94, 105
Veto, iv, 68, 152, 265, 383, 389, 409, 491

Walker, Robert J., iv, 484, 499
War. (See *Mexico*.)
Webster, Daniel, Senator, iv, 41, 98, 150, 163, 199, 290, 291, 511; Secretary of State, 361, 380, 386, 393, 395, 400, 403, 434; in retirement, 436, 437, 447, 458, 466, 478
Western life, in 1831, iv, 26
Whigs, iv, 191, 286, 328, 362, 430
White House, iv, 116, 148
White, Hugh L., iv, 35, 42, 91, 150, 199, 236
Whitney, Reuben, iv, 133, 159, 175
Wilmot proviso, iv, 543
Wisconsin, iv, 543
Wise, Henry A., iv, 301, 309, 366, 373, 383, 392, 432, 441, 454, 455, 501
Woman, iv, 14, 311, 415
Woodbury, Levi, iv, 35, 138, 167, 502
Wool, iv, 57, 59. (See *Tariff*.)
Wright, Silas, iv, 42, 163, 284, 461, 467, 478, 501

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